The Washington Monthly

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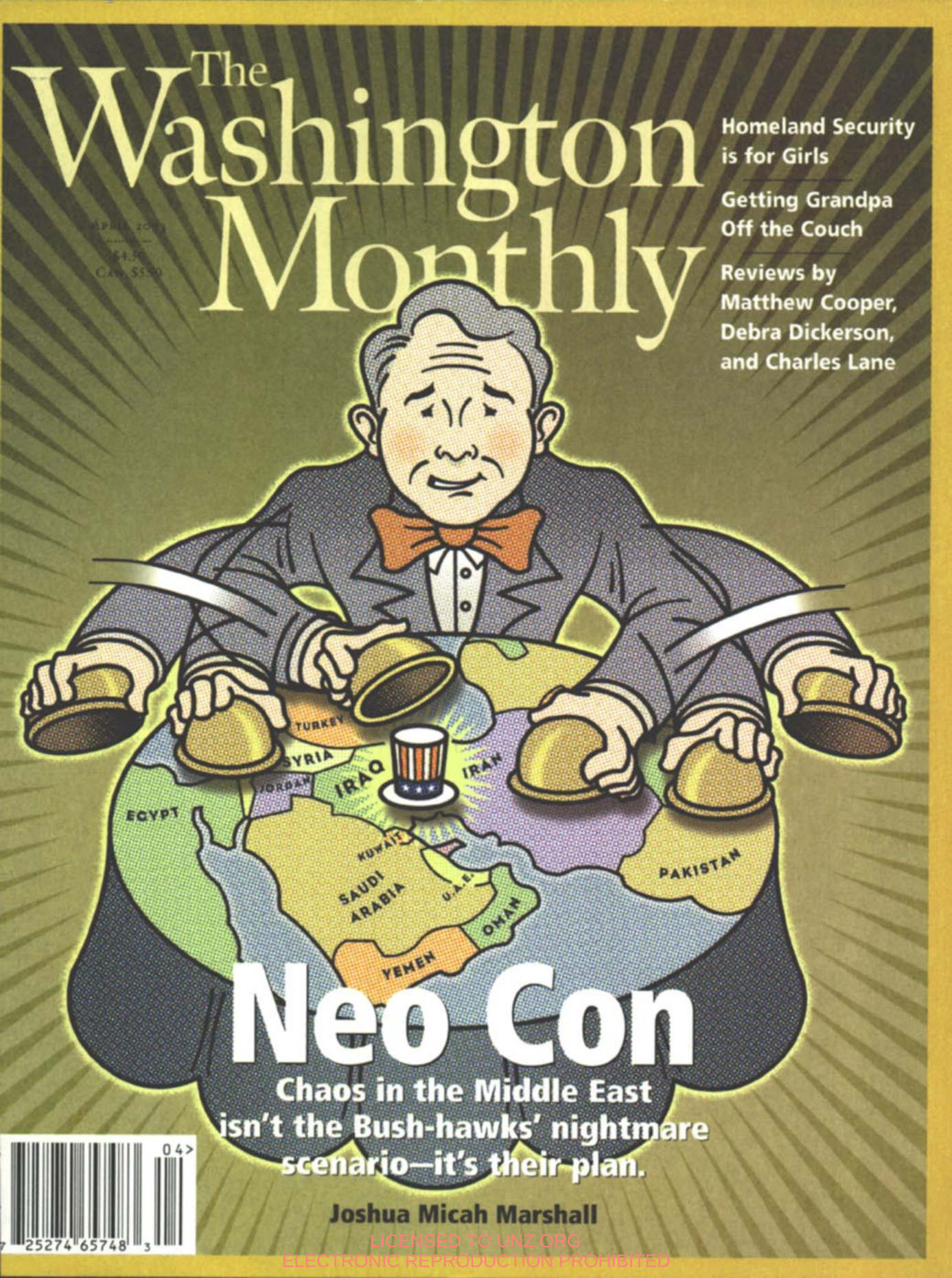
Homeland Security is for Girls

Getting Grandpa Off the Couch

Reviews by Matthew Cooper, Debra Dickerson, and Charles Lane



Neo Con

Chaos in the Middle East isn't the Bush-hawks' nightmare scenario—it's their plan.

Joshua Micah Marshall

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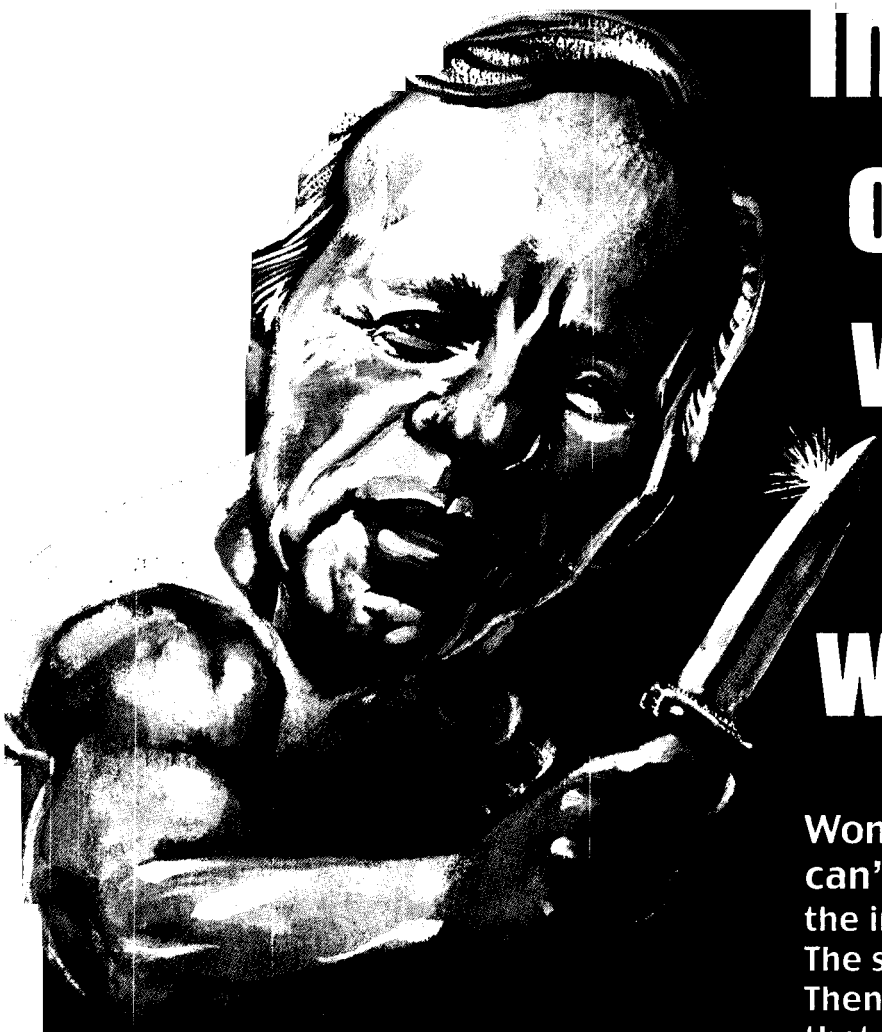

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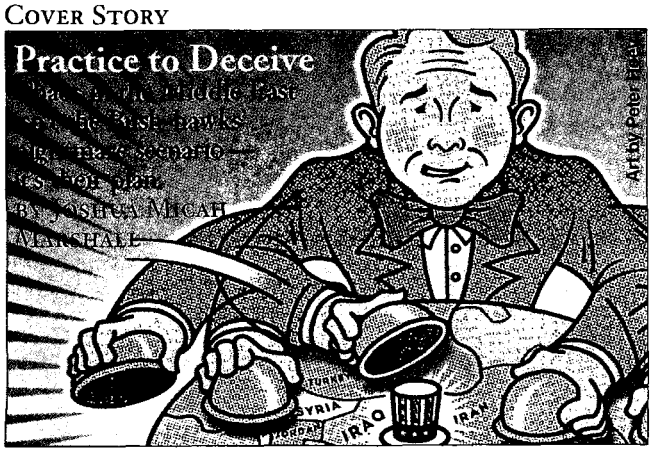

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Letters

Count Down

One aspect of Joshua Green's article ("Reagan's Liberal Legacy," January/February) that concerns me is the number of persons "on the federal payroll" during the Reagan and Clinton presidencies. A close examination of the record shows that the reduction in the number of persons "on the federal payroll" during the administration of President Clinton came as a result of the huge number of people discharged from the armed services during his term as President. The "non-defense" payroll actually increased—and rather substantially—during President Clinton's term. So, to conclude that President Clinton decreased the size of government by reducing the number of persons on the federal payroll is simply false.

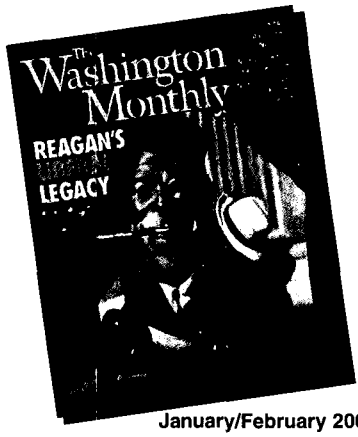
PAUL S. PARKER
via email

Joshua Green responds: The number of armed services personnel did indeed decrease under Clinton. But that in no way contradicts what I wrote. The number of people on the federal payroll increased by 61,000 under Reagan; it decreased by 373,000 under Clinton. By any measure other than Bush administration math, a decrease is still a decrease.

Flash Flood

Alicia Mundy's article ("Hot Flash, Cold Cash," January/February) mischaracterizes the goals and ignores the accomplishments of the Society for Women's Health Research, using innuendo and misstatements to inaccurately portray the organization.

The real story is that the Society has successfully fought for policy and scientific changes to advance medical research. Our advocacy efforts to routinely include women in clinical trials and analyze research data by sex have provided vital new information to improve women's health. The Society helped achieve increased women's health-research funding, initiated a landmark Institute of Medicine report



January/February 2003

on analyzing data by sex, and continues to educate women about health issues that previously received no attention.

The Society is extremely successful both financially and legislatively at accomplishing long-range goals. Like other not-for-profit health organizations, the Society accepts individual, foundation, government, and corporate (who do a significant percentage of research in the U.S.) support for scientific meetings, advocacy, and public education programs.

While the Society's primary focus is on sex differences and clinical trials, we did comment on the Women's Health Initiative because of its significance to women. Our position is similar to those of the American College of Ob/Gyn, North American Menopause Association, and the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals. Our statements and testimony as well as all our position papers, press releases, and reports are readily available on our Web site at www.womens-health.org.

DENISE FAUSTMAN, M.D., PH.D.
Board Chair, Society for Women's Health Research; Associate Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School; Director, Immunology Laboratory, Mass. General Hospital

I believe Alicia Mundy's article unjustly portrays Phyllis Greenberger and the Society for Women's Health Research, and, by extension, undermines the credibility of a vast number of not-for-profit health and patient-advocacy organizations. The Society is a hard-working nonprofit group that draws upon the leadership of some of the most distinguished scientists and authorities on women's health in the nation. For instance, it was the Society that urged the National Institutes of Health to properly study the effects of new medications on women and to boost the role of women as health-research professionals.

I look forward to the Society for Women's Health Research, with Phyllis Greenberger at the helm, continuing to lead the way in advancing and disseminating accurate and useful health information for women across our country.

DANIEL PERRY
Executive Director, Alliance for Aging Research, Washington, D.C.

Bravo to a long-overdue, in-depth article on the problems that inevitably follow when a nonprofit advocacy organization accepts too much funding from the pharmaceutical industry. On a number of occasions, I have been struck by how the comments or positions taken by the Society for Women's Health Research's president have been biased strongly in favor of industry interests rather than consumer interests.

For example, when a cheaper, plant-based estrogen came up for approval—with thorough scientific testing and FDA scientist endorsement of its equivalent efficacy in comparison to Premarin—the Society for Women's Health Research opposed its approval. In May 1996, Phyllis Greenberger told *The New York Times*, "The real issue is to promote research, and the scientific community feels strongly that the opportunity to patent motivates research ... This should be resolved by the scientific community. I'm sure they have good intentions, but I don't see why Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan should be talking about patenting genes." Advocacy organizations that truly serve in the public's interest try to create a more informed lay public—by encouraging the participation of leaders like Steinem, as well as the participation of everyone capable of careful consideration of even complex issues. We leave these debates solely to the scientific community and industry interests at our own peril.

JUDY NORSIGIAN
Executive Director, Our Bodies, Ourselves, Boston, Mass.

Thanks very much for your impor-

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tant article about the Society for Women's Health Research's conflicts of interest. While SWHR was once an effective and important voice for women's health, my own organization has repeatedly seen the group kowtow to corporate sponsors. For example, several former breast-implant manufacturers are involved with the organization. In October 1996, during the heat of court activity with these companies, SWHR hosted an event at the National Press Club to dispel questions about the safety of the implants. Dow Corning and Bristol Myers Squibb representatives actively worked the press at the event, although there was no similar attendance by women's health groups.

Even manufacturers and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration acknowledge that silicone and saline breast implants have high product failure rates and severe complications. It's a shame that SWHR, founded as an advocate of cutting-edge women's health research, has not been able to do the same.

SYBIL NIDEN GOLDRICH
Command Trust Network
via email

Three cheers for Alicia Mundy and her article exposing in almost frightening detail the extent to which the women's health agenda is being driven—through organizations like the Society for Women's Health Research—by companies whose bottom line depends on selling women things they may not need.

The women's-health movement in general, and the breast-cancer community in particular, is increasingly being funded by companies whose interest is more in profits than in women's lives. A passing look at the list of funders for most breast-cancer organizations reveals a number of companies that produce cancer drugs, including Astra Zeneca, the principal corporate sponsor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month activities in October, and Myriad Genetics, the patent holder on breast-cancer genetic testing. From genetic testing to mammography screening, and from new treatments to pills for breast-cancer "prevention" and beyond, pharmaceutical companies are influencing what many breast-cancer organizations say and do.

Breast Cancer Action is the only national breast cancer organization that expressly refuses to accept funds from businesses that profit from cancer. When we have something to say, you don't need to wonder who paid us to say it.

BARBARA A. BRENNER
Executive Director, Breast Cancer Action
San Francisco, Calif.

Radio Daze

While Brian Montopoli's article on NPR ("All Things Considerate," January/February) said nothing very interesting about NPR itself, it did bring a bright message to the boomer-friendly fog where I live: Thirty-odd years ago, my generation annoyed the hell out of everyone around us—and we still do so today. We still drive everyone else nuts, inconsiderately and flagrantly imposing our tastes and points of view across multiple generation gaps. Still got the moves!

SUSAN M. HAGADORN
via email

Brian Montopoli's contention that of the two public radio giants, NPR and PRI, PRI is the hipper, younger version surprised me. I'm a young person, a college freshman, and I might even be a little bit hip. But I've never considered shows on PRI like "Studio 360" or "Marketplace" particularly in tune with my interests. In fact, I've always thought "Studio 360"'s failure is exactly the kind of thing that Montopoli says is NPR's: Attempts to hit the younger audience end up degenerating into pieces on "older people's ideas of what younger people ought to like."

Another part of the story, though, disturbed me in a more serious way. This is the inherent assumption that the best way to target a younger audience is to wipe out any "news-driven" content, or at least somehow gloss it over with high-tech talk. I can't argue with the statement that young people tend not to be as informed as the rest of the world, but I really believe there must be a way to get young people involved with the news of their world through media that doesn't involve erasing the whole "news" part of the media.

ELIZABETH GREEN
via email

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

Zip from Zacarias • Incurious Inspectors • Wall Street Pillow Talk
District Dysfunction • 911 Unplugged

"A CROSS BETWEEN SUSAN Sarandon and Donna from *Mind of the Married Man* ... Personable, articulate, sits on nonprofit boards." For me, this stood out among a list of personal ads from *Harvard Magazine* recently compiled by *The Washington Post*'s Peter Carlson. As a septuagenarian who tends toward the short and portly side—one commentator, referring to the title of this column, observed, "He looks more like Sancho Panza"—I long ago abandoned hope of lighting up the eyes of the opposite sex. Now, however, I can say, "My dear, you know I sit on three nonprofit boards."

WATCHING THE RECENT CABLE movie, *The Pentagon Papers*, I was reminded of the 6-3 Supreme Court vote that allowed *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* to continue printing the now-famous record of how we became mired in Vietnam. It was a great moment in the history of the First Amendment. But stop a moment and consider what would happen if a similar case came before today's Supreme Court involving news the Bush administration didn't like. Do you think that these justices would stand up for freedom of the press, as their predecessors did?

AMONG MILITARY PEOPLE, THE Air Force is widely considered the most coddled branch of the armed forces. Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough of *The Washington Times* recently laid their hands on an Air Force memo that helps explain why. This message to Air Force personnel about to deploy with members of other services reads:

"AF people deploying to a joint environment can make the most of the experience if they learn the cultural differences of other services. For example, units with an Army or Marine Corps officer in charge may require group PT."

Physical training may be avoided by today's Air Force, but I can personally testify that it was diligent in its performance of group calisthenics during World War II. I saw newsreels and photographs in the newspapers of trainees performing their exercises on a field. Of course, as an infantryman, I did notice that the field was next to their Miami Beach hotel.

ONE BENEFIT OF GETTING PAST Bush's obsession with Iraq is that the administration may at long last attend to more important matters. In the realm of foreign affairs, none is more critical than securing a just peace between Israel and Palestine. This seemed to be finally, if grudgingly, acknowledged by Bush last month after considerable prodding from friends like Tony Blair. When Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar visited Crawford, pledging solidarity on Iraq, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, "he also stressed the great importance to Europe and the Middle East for Mr. Bush to show visible progress soon on the Israel-Palestine dispute." Another leader sympathetic to the United States, Jordan's foreign minister, Marwan Muasher, recently told the *Post*'s David Ignatius that the best way to stem a post-Iraq renewal of Islamic militancy against the United States is for the Bush administration to show that it is serious about reviving the peace process and halting Israeli settlements on the West Bank. "If you don't deal with settlements quickly, we are approaching the time when a viable Palestinian state isn't possible."

Israeli settlements already surround the Arab city of Bethlehem. Bush has done nothing to stop these settlements, although the pace at which they are being established has accelerated under his pal Ariel Sharon. Indeed, *Slate*'s Mickey Kaus writes of the Bush administration, "The Likudniks are really in charge now." The *Post*'s Robert Kaiser reports, "For the first time, a U.S. administration and a Likud government in Israel are pursuing nearly identical policies."

For Bush and Karl Rove, this means they won't need butterfly ballots to carry Florida next time. But for many of their subordinates, like Elliott Abrams, director of Mideast Affairs for the National Security Council, this is not a matter of cynical political calculation but of passionate conviction. His guru, one he shares with Donald Rumsfeld, is Richard Perle, who has urged Israel to repudiate the Oslo peace accords.

If the settlements continue and Israel's armed forces continue to protect them, Palestinians could be reduced to the state of Native Americans in the 19th century, slaughtering some settlers now and then but generally suppressed by the U.S. Army. Already, their circumstances are remarkably similar. "Two Studies Find the Palestinian People Impoverished and the Economy in a Shambles" was the headline over a March 5 report by James Bennet in *The New York Times*.

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WE HAVE NOTED THAT THE FBI's culture favors prosecution over prevention, and that this tendency is not good for the war on terrorism. Colleen Rowley, the whistle-blower from the FBI's Minneapolis office, recently offered this example. The FBI and the Justice Department have concentrated on making their case against Zacarias Moussaoui and Richard Reid and have failed to question them about other al Qaeda contacts and operations, information that might be useful in preventing future terrorist attacks. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Moussaoui's lawyer confirmed Rowley's accusation: "To my knowledge the government has never attempted to talk to Moussaoui after September 11. I would think there is somebody in the government who would be curious about what Moussaoui knew."

ARE WOMEN LESS ROMANTIC and more materialistic than men? Sixty-two percent of men said, "'Just spending time together' would be an ideal Valentine's celebration," according to a survey reported by *Newsweek*'s Elise Christenson. Fifty-three percent of the women, on the other hand, say "they'd most likely break up with someone who didn't give them a gift." The person most often named by women as the least likely to be kissed on Valentine's Day is "a man who's broke."

HAVE YOU ASSUMED THAT ALL banks contribute to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation? If so, you're wrong. Ninety-one percent of banks don't pay a cent, even though they use the fact that they are FDIC-insured as one of their main selling points to depositors.

The FDIC can't require a bank that is "well-capitalized" and "well-managed" to contribute until its resources have fallen below $1.25 for every $100 of deposits. That would only happen if a lot of banks were failing, meaning the economy would be in bad shape, and surviving banks should be using their money not for FDIC contributions, but as *The Washington Post*'s Anitha Reddy points out, "to strengthen their balance sheets and extend credit" to help the economy recover. The obvious solution is to require that all banks contribute to the FDIC regularly, and not just when disaster is imminent.

For Bush and Rove, siding with Sharon means they won't need butterfly ballots to carry Florida next time.

A FICTION OF HISTORY—POPularized by Richard Nixon as he tried to demonstrate that other presidents had lied—is that Franklin Roosevelt's inability to walk unaided was not known by the public because his condition was concealed by the White House. It is true that the White House tried to avoid having pictures of Roosevelt taken in his wheelchair, but it is definitely not true that Americans did not know about his paralysis. Remember, the disease at that time was not called polio, but infantile paralysis—and everyone knew FDR had been a victim. Since correcting the Nixon myth, as regular readers know, has been a minor crusade of mine, I have presented considerable evidence to make my case in previous columns. But, I recently discovered the most impressive proof I've yet found. This is from *Time*'s Jan. 6, 1941, issue:

"The president came in five minutes before the broadcast on his small rubber-tired wheelchair, pushed by George Field ..."

This appeared in the third paragraph of *Time*'s lead article during an era when the magazine was not only widely read, but at the peak of its influence. There was no hint in the story that the wheelchair was news or that its use was anything other than routine.

ONE LESSON FROM THE RECENT tragedy in West Warwick, R.I., is to think twice before you enter a nightclub again. John Flansburgh of the group "They Might Be Giants" tells John Leland of *The New York Times* about finding himself on stage with a mob in front and locked doors behind: "I can see the fuse box held together with duct tape, and I know there's 1,000 people between me and the nearest unlocked exit." He adds, "I don't think anybody's surprised by what's happened."

A second lesson is to take a look at your local inspectors. The West Warwick inspector had failed to notice the flammable foam soundproofing on the nightclub's walls for three years in a row. In two of these years, he didn't bother to inspect at all, according to *The Boston Globe*. The *Globe* also found that West Warwick had only one inspector for a town of 30,000. Often, fire inspectors are only part-time. Bristol, R.I.'s only inspector is also its fire chief.

The third lesson is that inspectors are subject to the temptations of bribery and political pressure. For example, a Wisconsin state inspector was recently pressured by a Milwaukee politician to drop charges of asbestos violations against the politician's brother. The politician also offered the inspector tickets to a $500-per-person event in honor of President Bush.

The fourth lesson is to find out whether inspections are actually taking place. According to *Governing* magazine, after Connecticut's sole funeral-home inspector retired in 1989, the state's funeral homes went uninspected for almost a decade, until New Haven police found five decomposed bodies in the garage of the Wade Funeral Home. The failure to provide effective regulation for the funeral industry—a half-century after Jessica Mitford's memorable exposé—has to rank as a major national scandal. Practically every-

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one gets ripped off by these people, but because our indignation is usually smothered by grief, we don't press for the reforms so obviously needed.

ONE OF THE PRIMARY PURPOSES of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 was to simplify IRS rules and regulations. That the bill's effect has not been permanent is indicated by the fact that the Commerce Clearing House publication devoted to these rules and regulations now numbers 54,586 pages, which Tim Horn of *The Wall Street Journal* notes is "an increase of about 2,500 pages from last year, and is more than twice as many as in 1984."

SPEAKING OF EVIDENCE TO support a point made here—in this case that medical licensing boards usually fail to punish doctors guilty of malpractice—further proof comes from Dr. Sidney Wolfe, who head's Ralph Nader's Public Citizen Health Research Group.

Wolfe points out that only 15 percent of New York physicians who have paid five or more malpractice claims have been disciplined by the state medical board. Nationally, it is pretty much the same, one out of six. In Pennsylvania, the figure is only 5 percent.

WHEN A DUPONT CIRCLE house caught fire recently, the first three 911 calls were put on hold. There were 14 operators on hand, but only six were actually answering calls. Two had "unplugged" five minutes before their shift came to an end. Two were on "authorized breaks." And four others, reports *The Washington Post*, "were on duty but not actually taking calls." Why weren't they? A man was killed by the fire. In still another example of the dedication of the District's employees, an ambulance driver was ordered to the scene of a cardiac arrest at 6:01 a.m. He decided not to go because his shift had ended at 6 a.m., and did not bother to inform his colleagues until he returned his ambulance to its quarters. Another ambulance was dispatched, but by the time it arrived the victim was dead.

EVEN AMIDST THE COLOSSAL dysfunction of the District government, one agency—the Department of Human Services—stands out as the model of ineptitude and indifference. Two years ago, Mayor Anthony Williams named the highly regarded Carolyn Colvin to straighten the agency out. Now she has quit. Why?

The District's government stands as the most compelling argument against democracy I know.

"I don't think any investigation I made prior to coming aboard could have prepared me for the level of challenge," she told *The Washington Post*'s Sewell Chan. "There are years of neglect in this department ... You're plugging the dike, trying to prevent or respond to crisis after crisis." When Deputy Mayor Carolyn Graham, who had earlier run the department, was asked if she would fill in until a replacement for Colvin was found, she replied, "Absolutely not. My own physical and emotional and professional needs cannot support that. Never again."

JUST ONE MORE STORY—THIS from the *Post*'s Colbert King—to illustrate the depth of the local abyss. The Department of Human Services placed a seven-year-old and an infant in foster care, as well as three other children in daycare, in a house where also dwelled one Donald Twitty Jr, a.k.a. Ronald Twitty. Donald or Ronald has a record. In fact, he's been convicted of three violent crimes. When police raided the house to arrest him, they found 585 Ziploc bags of crack cocaine and a loaded 9mm Taurus semiautomatic pistol with an additional supply of ammunition. Just think of it. These kids not only were given the opportunity to have their lives enriched by getting high on cocaine, but also of being wounded or killed in a shootout!

MY FRIEND MARK SHIELDS HAS written a marvelous column making fun of Bush's advocacy of democracy for Iraq but not for the District of Columbia. He is right to the extent that Washington does not, but should have, voting representation in Congress. But the truth is, the rest of the District government is largely democratic, and it stands as the most compelling argument against democracy that I know.

I WANT TO CONGRATULATE Shankar Vedantam of *The Washington Post* for his excellent article on the problem of the cultural divide between the engineers and the managers at NASA. Culture explains so much of what goes wrong in Washington, yet while the anthropological approach has become common among business journalists, it is not used nearly enough by reporters here. Vedantam quotes a survey by physicist Richard Feynman after the Challenger disaster concerning the differences in perception of danger between the engineers and the managers. The engineers said one flight in 100 was likely to experience catastrophe, the managers said one in 100,000. Feynman told Ronald Reagan, "For a successful technology [program], reality must take precedence over public relations, for nature cannot be fooled."

The fact is that for any program to succeed, it must be based on reality and constantly reevaluated in terms of actual experience. The effort to find out the truth about how programs are performing must be led by the agency's head. In NASA's case that person, Sean

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O'Keefe, did not find out about the engineers' concerns until weeks after the crash.

"Why was it that even if there was hint of a footnote of a memo on a scrap of an envelope that was within this investigation's scope, that it only made its way to you yesterday, at the same time it made its way to everyone else on the AP wire?" asked Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.).

What happens is that too often the people at the top don't want to know the truth. This was the case with the *Challenger*. The top levels of the agency were looking forward to Ronald Reagan praising their program to Congress in his State of the Union address the night of the day that the *Challenger* was launched. Postponing the launch because of the danger that the O-rings would freeze that cold morning would have eliminated NASA from the speech, which is surely why intermediate-level managers at NASA told worried engineers at the contractor Morton Thiokol to keep their mouth shut.

SPEAKING OF THE CULTURE OF bureaucracy, *Slate*'s Timothy Noah has come up with a lovely illustration from the State Department in the form of a document entitled, "Ground Rules for Interviewing State Department Officials." Theoretically, officials are not supposed to leak. But, of course, practically everyone does, and the ground rules implicitly acknowledge the practice. Not only do they cover "on the record" interviews, which of course are the only ones that officials are supposed to give, but "on background," "on deep background," and "off the record," each of which is a form of leaking.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the rules are needed. A few years ago, Noah questioned a flock of *Washington Post* reporters to find out how they defined the terms. Each had different definitions.

THE SEC IS INVESTIGATING whether Holly Becker, then an Internet analyst at Lehman Brothers, tipped her husband to a coming Lehman downgrade of Amazon in time for him to unload Amazon stock before the news broke.

"I'm surprised this is the first time this has come out," Amy McCooey, a Goldman Sachs trader, tells Timothy O'Brien of *The New York Times*. "There's got to be more like this. But it's hard to figure out, because if someone talks about it at home in bed, where's the proof?"

Evidence that there was at least one other case comes from a confession made by Nikki Haskell, who was a pioneer woman broker more than 30 years ago. She is quoted in Susan Antilla's *Tales From the Boom-Boom Room*: "I got some of my best information through pillow talk."

WE'VE ALL READ ABOUT THE harm done by ephedra, including its suspected role in the recent death of a young Baltimore Orioles pitcher, Steve Bechler. But do you remember that Stephanie Mencimer told us in these pages two years ago ("Scorin' with Orrin," September 2001) that the man most responsible for our failure to regulate this and other herbal remedies and supplements is Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah)? At that time, Hatch's position was quite clear. "If you die from taking too many ephedra, maybe the problem was you. It's not the government's fault," a Hatch aide told Mencimer. But as Michael O'Keeffe, a sports writer for the *New York Daily News*, points out, Hatch has changed his tune. "The recent tragic death of this athlete and the ensuing confusion over whether the dietary supplement ephedra may be linked underscores the need for prompt federal review," said Hatch, just after Bechler's death.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION may be on the right track in pressing for more educational content for Head Start. This program, which could make a real difference in the lives of millions of children, is too often used simply to provide the most basic kind of daycare and to give jobs to the unemployed, with minimum regard for their ability to teach. Of course, to get better teachers, Bush must offer to increase the miserable wages most Head Start programs pay. Unfortunately, his record on backing up his educational reforms with dollars is, to put it as gently as possible, pathetic.

WHEN YOU'RE A LEGISLATOR, as I once was back in West Virginia, one lure the devil presents to you is to give you an apparent victory by getting your bill passed if you just accept an emasculating amendment. The bill will still sound good, and, your name being on it, you will get the credit—even though in your heart you know that the bill is meaningless. A lot of legislators, I can assure you, succumb to this temptation. I was therefore delighted to report that Mike Oliverio of the West Virginia state senate has resisted. He refused to accept a conference-committee compromise on his All Terrain Vehicle safety bill that would have lifted the requirement that children under 18 wear helmets while operating ATVs when they are doing so on private property. "That's pretty much every time a kid would be operating an ATV," Oliverio told the *Charleston Gazette*. "He's either going to be on his property or on someone else's."

I WAS REMINDED OF A LESS-admirable side of my home state's politics by an anecdote told by Dale Bumpers in his new memoir, *The Best Lawyer in a One Lawyer Town*. During the 1970 Arkansas primary, a rural sheriff managed to credit 400 of Bumpers's votes to his opponent, Orval Faubus. Bumpers went on to win, despite the theft. However, when the guilty sheriff showed up at Bumpers's victory party, the senator berated him for his carelessness with the ballots. Unabashed, the sheriff grinned, "Next time we'll do it for you."

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DICK GEPHARDT IN 2004

St. Louis, Mo.

To: Dick Gephardt
From: Tucker Carter, political consultant

Re: Becoming More Jewish

Dick, the recent revelations that most of the Democratic candidates have Jewish roots requires us to take swift action. Just to review the recent news: Howard Dean's wife and kids are Jewish, Dennis Kucinich keeps kosher (because of his Jewish girlfriend), General Wesley Clark comes from a line of rabbis in Minsk, Hillary Clinton's grandmother married someone named Max Rosenberg, and John Kerry, of all people, learned that both his paternal grandparents were Jewish (Kerry was originally Kohn).

Call me paranoid, but I suspect these candidates saw how well the Jewish thing polled for Joe Lieberman and did some creative genealogy to come up with Jewish roots. Kerry's polling, in fact, revealed a 6% hike in his favorables when voters were asked, "How would you feel if it turned out that Senator Kerry had Jewish roots?" This polled much higher than when they asked about Hinduism or Baha'i.

My polling shows a similar pattern. Apparently, while being Jewish used to be associated with greed, disloyalty, and pushiness, it now is associated with good SATs, strong families, and fiscal responsibility.

Unfortunately, we're too late to simply find some Jewish ancestors for you. We're going to have to devise ways for you to seem Jewish despite the baggage of having all gentile ancestors.

A few ideas:

1) **Announce you are Lactose-Intolerant.** Most candidates have some medical problem, and if yours is lactose intolerance, a common affliction of European Jews, you can imply that you have Jewish roots without actually having to prove it.

2) **Throw Yiddish Into Stump Speeches.** Try getting the crowd to chant, "Bush is a Schmuck; Don't Buy His Shtick." For your big speech coming up at the Longshoreman's union, let's announce "the European Union is meshugenah!"

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3) **Work With Jane.** You know I think the world of your wife, but she is—how should I put this?—about as shiksa as they come. We need to make her seem more Hadassah Lieberman, less Barbara Bush. Can she learn to bake potato kugel?

4) **Turn More of Your Statements into Questions.** In accordance with Jewish rabbinical tradition, you should now answer all questions with questions. For instance, if a reporter asks you, "What do you think of forcing a regime change in Iraq?" you should not answer that "a properly orchestrated regime change could stabilize the region, and promote American national security interests." Rather, you should say, "So, what's not to like?"

5) **Eat More Chinese Food.** While I don't fully appreciate Jewish people's fondness for Chinese food, I have taken the liberty of asking our research and oppo folks to locate a Chinese restaurant in every midwestern state. If we can find one, I recommend replacing the classic coffee-at-the-diner-outside-the-factory with a mu-shu-at-the-Chinese-restaurant-near-the-outlet-mall.

6) **Develop a Streisand Strategy.** I'm working on a separate memo on how to get her endorsement. But we need to have a plan B. I recommend that we simultaneously court Mandy Patinkin, a move that would fly below the radar screen of the mainstream press, which fails to understand Patinkin's apparent status as a major Jewish cultural figure.

We have some catching up to do, but if our strategies are fruitful, our voters will multiply. Shalom.

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Homeland Security is for Girls

When it comes to worrying about terrorism, men are from Mars and women are from Venus.

BY GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

PRESIDENT BUSH WAS FAMOUSLY criticized after September 11 for asking nothing of Americans but that they go shopping. In February, Bush's Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge went a step further: He gave Americans a shopping list.

On the day he delivered the ominous news of an Orange alert, Ridge suggested that citizens secure duct tape, plastic sheeting, and other necessities to construct a "safe room" in the event that a toxic cloud of something awful happened to settle over their homes. As a resident of Washington D.C., a city that's been through two attacks, Ridge didn't have to tell me twice. I grabbed J., my "emergency preparedness buddy," and set out for Target. We both know she's not good in a crisis; but that's OK, because I'm the type who's had a flashlight, Cipro, and a National Guard-issued P100 toxic dust mask on hand for more than a year. (Besides, she's got both the things I require in an evacuation partner: a sense of humor and a car.)

Veteran mallgoers can attest that supply shopping in these anxious times is uncannily like the annual day-after-Thanksgiving blitz. Our neighborhood hardware store was advising customers to line up at 6:30 a.m. *For duct tape!* So we ventured instead to the bountiful malls of Northern Virginia with no fewer than four—yes, *four*—crosschecked supply lists in hand. You see, my apartment sits within the area around the White House that *Washington Post* columnist Marc Fisher has helpfully dubbed "the Death Zone" (thanks, Marc). So to prepare for a massive, radiation-spewing explosion, I figured I needed Ace bandages, large amounts of gauze, medical tape, antibiotic ointment, industrial-strength soap, and eyewash. Check. Check. Check. And for good measure, J. and I splurged not on a pair of Prada mules but on a pair of high-powered communication radios.

As J. and I waited in a checkout line long enough to rival the next *Star Wars* premiere, something strange gradually dawned on me. Looking around at my fellow preparedness shoppers, I realized that most of those fumbling with D batteries, prepared foodstuffs, and enough bottled water to free Willy were women. Aside from the unshaven few who always huddle around the high-tech gadgets, the male of the species was virtually absent.

As my week dragged on, I began to notice this pattern everywhere. Newspapers regularly publish reports that women are, for example, twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with panic disorder and social phobia, nearly twice as likely to become depressed, and of the 11 million Americans who suffer from phobias, most are—surprise!—women. Men, I decided, are strangely immune from terrorism worries, as well.

It wasn't just my male friends and colleagues who seemed unable to tear themselves away from "SportsCenter." It was also the ones in positions to really worry.

GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA *is a senior editor of* The American Prospect.

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Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld—a man who works in a building that *has already been hit by terrorists!*—admitted to WMAL radio that he and his family actually *hadn't* rushed to stock their home with duct tape, plastic sheeting, and bottled water: "I would like to say I did," Rumsfeld mused, as though he hadn't a care in the world, but "I don't believe we do." This was even true of Mr. Orange Alert himself who, it turns out, like so many manly American men, delegated homeland preparedness to the little woman. "Mr. Ridge has a home emergency kit of food, water, and batteries that his wife assembled several months ago," *The New York Times* reported.

As I contemplated my own response to the Orange Alert and the fact that men were noticeably AWOL from the hardware stores, grocery stores, and pharmacies while the womenfolk prepared for World War III, as I watched the men I know display the same Zen-like indifference that characterizes their approach not just to terror alerts but to ... well ... everything, and as I perused the wave of data that showed how the genders responded differently to the terrorism alert, I decided my initial suspicion was indeed a scientific fact: Homeland security is for girls.

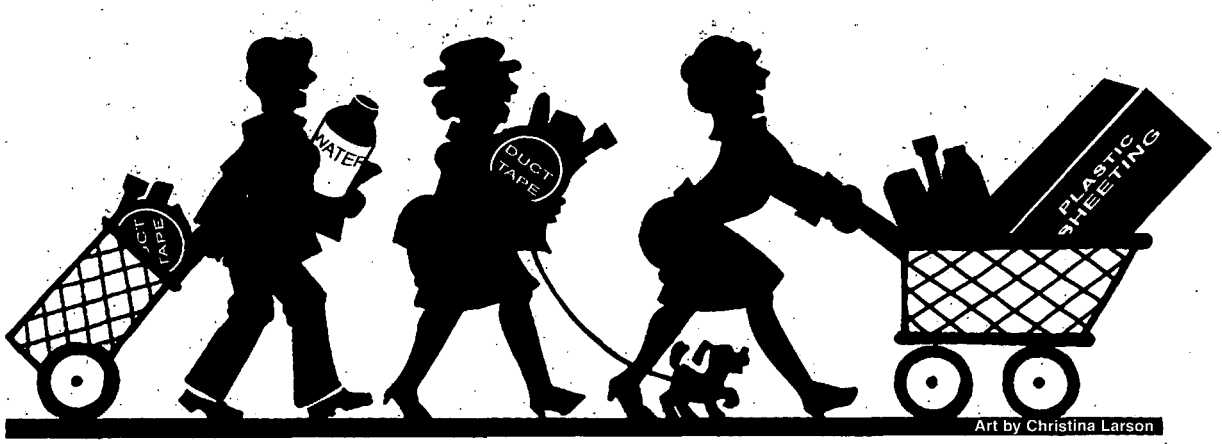
Duct-Tape Divas

Ever since September 11, there's been a steady stream of evidence that when it comes to the question of terrorism, men are from Mars and women are from Venus. Certainly, two of the loudest voices of homeland-security anxiety belong to women. Sally Quinn, renowned Georgetown socialite and *Washington Post* reporter, could very well be the leading candidate for the title of "most anxious woman in America." *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd is running a close second.

"Nobody in America makes me feel more insecure than Tom Ridge," Dowd confessed in a Feb. 23 column. "The man who is supposed to restore my confidence in the prospect of my safety gives me the uneasy sense that the door's unlocked, the alarm's off, and there's a ladder leaning up against the house." Not to be outdone, Quinn penned her own column. "A large portion of the population is in denial," she pointed out, in what perhaps was an oblique reference to the masculine gender. "Those people need to understand that they can do things to save their lives and the lives of their families." Quinn wasn't content with a mere op-ed; she's spearheading an entire special supplement in *The Washington Post* on how to prepare for an attack.

While Quinn and Dowd trilled in the papers, women all over Washington were making plans. According to a *Washington Post* survey, about 62 percent of all people in the Washington region took at least one step to prepare themselves for an attack in the week after the Code was raised. But statistics suggest most were women. An ABC News-*Washington Post* poll showed that 40 percent of women were worried about becoming a victim of terrorism, compared to just 25 percent of men. A University of Washington study conducted shortly after the 9/11 attacks showed that women travelers found flying more stressful than men. And a Pew Research Center survey found that half of all women, but just 30 percent of men, were "somewhat" or "very" concerned about new attacks. So naturally, more women than men reported post-attack depression and insomnia. And what do men think about all this? While Dowd agonized over *Cape Fear*-style home-invasion scenarios, *Times* columnist Thomas Friedman—on the same page and on the very same day—proudly insisted "the only survival purchase I've made since Code Orange is a new set of Ben Hogan Apex irons."

What is it about terrorism and men that sparks this strutting machismo and brings out their inner Rumsfeld? I can think of three reasons. Any sentient



Art by Christina Larson

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female recognizes that there is nothing men hate more than shopping. In fact, scientists have documented this. In 1998, British psychologist David Lewis found that when men were faced with crowded stores and complex shopping expeditions, their symptoms of physical stress shot into the stratosphere. "In some cases," Lewis told reporters, "when we looked at heart rate and blood pressure, this is something you'd expect to see in a fighter pilot going into combat." The truth is that for most men, a trip to Target for a disaster supply kit may be scarier than doing nothing.

Number two—and the fact that this is the 21st century notwithstanding—women *still* hold primary responsibility for the care and maintenance of America's homes. The entire *home*land security debate is framed in terms of what you can do to protect your *home*, which essentially turns terrorism preparedness into a high-stress equivalent of baby-proofing. After all, Ridge dispatched millions of anxious Americans to *Home* Depot—not army surplus stores or Office Depot, mind you—for plastic sheeting and duct tape. So unless the Homeland Security Department's Green Alert involves some sort of lawn care competition that permits riding mowers, don't expect male involvement anytime soon.

The third reason for the homeland security gender gap is that, like Tom Ridge, men everywhere know that if they procrastinate for long enough, women will do the home job for them. In the annals of war, there is actually a long history of this. Earlier in the 20th century, "home defense" was considered an aspect of "feminine patriotism." Previous wars not only gave women specific roles, such as within the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, but called upon them explicitly to defend the home front and keep the home fires burning. While women have now moved into more substantive positions in America's military—as soldiers, support staff, and doctors—at home they've been left to fend for themselves. So once again, women are taking on the thankless but vital task of getting things ready. And when an attack does come, the men will be the ones scrambling around asking their wives where they keep D batteries and duct tape.

None of this makes life any easier for women, who have a harder time with terrorism even without the extra preparedness workload. A recent SLS Health study discovered that women were still considerably more traumatized by September 11, with one-third reporting anxiety or nightmares (compared to about zero percent of men). Women were also much likelier to avoid social situations or places they felt might be likely targets for future attacks. (Apparently we make an exception for Target.) And this is not just true of Washington-area women. The homeland security gender gap also showed up in studies of Canadian responses to 9/11.

So why do women feel they're more likely to be targets when in reality few outside certain neighborhoods are apt to be at any risk at all? "Women feel more insecure because generally they *are* more insecure," explains pollster Anna Greenberg. Women aren't just more likely to be more worried about terrorism than men, they're often more anxious about everything else that can go wrong, too. Which makes sense, she says, when you consider that women are more likely to be in the low-wage service sector, more likely to be laid off or unemployed, and more likely to be cash-strapped single heads of households. When things go wrong, they simply tend to hit women harder.

Strategies for Stress

While the woman in me was silently calculating the yards of duct tape I would need to secure my apartment, the political reporter in me got to thinking that any political party would be foolish not to notice this trend and exploit it. Neither party is, in fact, foolish.

As Greenberg's polling revealed after last year's elections, the gender gap Democrats have relied on for decades shrank dramatically. Democrats won women's votes by a meager 2 percent in 2002, down from the 6 to 10 point gaps in the 1990s. Pollsters note that this narrowing is due to Democrats losing some of their traditional advantage on issues such as Social Security, prescription drugs, and education. But Bush's tough line on terrorism is also making women feel more secure about supporting Republicans—though Ridge's ham-handed management of terror alarms has limited the GOP's appeal to women.

Conversely, it's no coincidence that the Democrats' main line of attack these days is how Republicans have shortchanged homeland security spending. What could appeal more to anxious women voters than a political party that fights alongside them in the thankless task of preparation? Indeed, since the election, Democrats—now led by a woman in the House of Representatives, remember—have hammered the Bush administration on this subject and seen their poll numbers rebound accordingly.

It's strange to think that the Orange Alert that sent J. and I scrambling for duct tape and walkie-talkies also played right into the parties' political strategies. Or maybe it's just that scientists still underestimate how much men hate shopping. ●

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Bragging Writes

How presidential candidates try to impress reporters with their reading lists.

BY BRENT KENDALL

IN THIS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SEASON, everything is happening faster. The primaries have been moved up, consultants hired sooner, and, because of the crowded field and mushrooming expense of running a campaign, fundraising has begun earlier. Consequently, the press is racing to handicap the candidates, subjecting them to the various litmus tests that once occurred much later in the cycle. Anything that can yield a clue is accorded instant significance. There have even been articles analyzing several of the candidates' wives (conventional wisdom so far: Hadassah Lieberman and Elizabeth Edwards are campaign assets; Teresa Heinz Kerry is a bit of a head case).

So it's no surprise that there's also early interest in candidates' answers to the question, "What's your favorite book?" This may seem an innocuous query, but it's actually one of the more treacherous a candidate can answer. In January, for instance, ABC's George Stephanopoulos asked Sen. John Edwards to name his favorite book. Edwards replied that it was I.F. Stone's *The Trial of Socrates*. On the surface, that seemed to hit just the right note. It's plausible that an ex-trial lawyer like Edwards would enjoy a book about the ultimate historical trial, and by choosing that particular title—a serious inquiry written for a popular audience—Edwards conveyed a sense of weightiness without appearing snobbish. But the choice also opened him up to criticism. Conservative commentator Bob Novak fumed on CNN's "Capital Gang": "That's incredible! Did Senator Edwards know that Izzy Stone was a lifelong Soviet apologist? Did he know of evidence that Stone received secret payments from the Kremlin?" Novak's rant illustrated how the slightest stumble on the book question can come back to hurt a candidate.

What a candidate chooses to read may seem like a small thing. Yet a person's literary tastes can be very revealing, as anyone who's ever scanned a stranger's bookshelf can attest. Book choices are especially prized by reporters, who use them as material for the narratives they write—narratives that often define candidates in the eyes of voters. Remember Michael Dukakis? His phlegmatic 1988 campaign was perfectly symbolized by his choice of vacation reading: a book entitled *Swedish Land-Use Planning*. Even if you knew nothing else about the Massachusetts governor, this tidbit suggested he was solution-oriented, practical to a fault, and probably not the sort of guy who'd be a lot of fun to have a beer with. Which is, of course, exactly the person the Democrats got.

Because the book question is so fraught with peril, candidates have increasingly figured out that they need to game the system. That's evident on the campaign trail today where, reporters say, Democratic candidates are toting the perfect "safe" book: volume three of Robert Caro's award-winning biographical series on Lyndon Johnson, *Master of the Senate*. The book is popular, serious, and imparts just the sort of gravitas presidential aspirants seek. Like a guy who reads Dostoyevsky in Starbucks to attract women, many candidates seem to choose books designed to impress reporters—though reporters, like women, often see through the charade. Says *USA Today* political columnist Walter Shapiro (who first unearthed Dukakis's book choice), "The number whom I've seen carrying the Caro book is greater than the people who've actually read it or finished it."

BRENT KENDALL *is a* Washington Monthly *editorial assistant.*

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Book Marks

Americans are often derided for valuing style over substance. In the realm of politics, however, it can make sense to do so. As political scientist James David Barber noted in his classic work from 1972, *The Presidential Character*, personality is a strong predictor of White House performance. Barber argued that to understand how a candidate might act in office, voters must "see the man as a whole," a prescription that made reading material—and the conclusions reporters extrapolated from it—fair game.

During the 1988 presidential race, the book question became *de rigueur*. After Shapiro exposed Dukakis's soporific choice, reporter Brit Hume asked Republican vice-presidential candidate Dan Quayle to identify any work of literature, art, or film he'd experienced in the previous two years that had had a particularly strong effect on him. Quayle rattled off three books, Richard Nixon's *1999: Victory Without War*, Sen. Richard Lugar's *Letters to the Next President*, and Bob Massie's *Nicholas and Alexandra*, about the fall of the Russian empire. Fine books all. But rather than impart to Quayle the mien of wisdom he'd no doubt hoped for, his choices, which seemed several grade levels beyond his intellect, telegraphed his very desperation to be taken seriously—the need for which was underscored later when Quayle remarked that Paul Johnson's *Modern Times* was "a very good historical book about history."

Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey took the opposite approach, tackling the book question headfirst when he sought the 1992 Democratic nomination. Kerrey readily offered that his favorite book was Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*, a novel that depicted the aimless existence of a soldier-turned-stockbroker named Binx Bolling. His answer may have revealed too much. *The New York Times*' Maureen Dowd pounced, claiming Kerrey's confession would worry voters, given that Percy's work was an "anthem of alienation" about a war veteran "out of touch with the rest of America." As *The New Yorker*'s Elizabeth Kolbert later put it, with 20/20 hindsight, "Here was a man proposing himself as the next leader of the free world while apparently identifying with a character who, to all outward appearances, seems to have completely lost his sense of direction." Ouch.

Kerrey holds no grudge against the press for engaging in such psychoanalysis. In fact, he says, there was some truth to it. His advice to the current candidates? Be authentic, but be prepared. "If you don't want to think about your answer ahead of time ... don't run for president. Because it's part of what you have to do," Kerrey told me. "No candidate is going to be successful by being themselves."

But at least he tried. In 2000, Bill Bradley staunchly refused to answer the book question, insisting it was irrelevant to his fitness for office. But even this non-answer proved revealing. It showed that Bradley considered himself above having to play the game. Which in turn reinforced the notion that he was aloof, a criticism that stuck and came to characterize the Bradley campaign, much as Dukakis's dullness had characterized his. In the end, even Bradley himself seemed to recognize this. When he withdrew from the race, he began his announcement speech by joking, "I want to begin this morning with a discussion of my favorite books."

But there is no better example of how books provide an insight into a candidate's persona than Bill Clinton. A legendary campaigner, Clinton famously had something to please everyone—including a different book for every constituency. (Not only did he feel your pain, he read your books.) As a voracious reader, he talked about books with gusto. If you asked him straight, he'd tell you his favorite was Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. For ivory-tower types, the answer switched to Lord Blake's *Disraeli*, a biography of the colorful 19th-century British prime minister. For the Oprah crowd? Clinton was a big fan of bestselling page-turners like Tony Hillerman and Sara Paretsky—Sue Grafton, too. In his unique way, Clinton's exuberance about books was genuine, something that voters picked up on. Indeed, the now ex-president continues to share his reading choices—he's even considering starting a book club through his not-yet-built presidential library.

The 2000 election demonstrated precisely how candidates' book choices play right into the media's preconceived storylines—for better and for worse. The vice president announced his book selection on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*. His choice of the French classic drew praise in some quarters. "It was heartening to hear the invocation of a serious book and a serious writer roll off the tongue of a presidential candidate. Even if Gore is posturing, he is posturing in the right direction," *The New Republic* pronounced. Unfortunately for Gore, *The Red and the Black* provided a convenient plotline for his detractors. Stendhal's protagonist Julien Sorel may be one of the great characters of 19th-century literature, but he was also an opportunist whose actions were calculated to advance his career. Reporters seized on Sorel's inauthenticity as an analogy for Gore's. When Gore decided not to pursue the 2004 nomination, *National Review* extended the analogy even further, writing that his

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fancy for "Stendhal's novel of a career chosen against inclination" was evidence that he "felt that politics was a burden."

George W. Bush fared much better, citing Marquis James's *The Raven*, a 1929 biography of Sam Houston, whose life had hit an alcohol-induced rock bottom after years of success, only to be once again lifted when he moved to Texas and rediscovered his guiding principles. That was Bush's campaign story in a nutshell—he'd had his problems, including drink, but loved Texas and righted his life there. (The choice was so perfect you could almost see Karl Rove slipping his own well-worn copy off his shelf and handing it to his candidate.) In the end, each book jibed with the media's storyline about each candidate—Bush, the easy-going, prodigal Texan, and Gore, the know-it-all pandering phony. The difference was that the analogy worked to Bush's favor, while Gore's did not.

Reuters

Bush flaunts his copy of Bernard Goldberg's bestseller, *Bias*.

Undaunted Caution

As a sport, picking books is a lot like figure skating. A contestant's success or failure is largely determined by a panel of judges—and, just as in figure skating, there are always judges who've got the fix in, as John Edwards learned.

The book question has been through enough election cycles that some general rules can be drawn. As Quayle demonstrated, it's easy to sniff out phonies. But Kerrey and Gore showed that it doesn't pay to be too authentic, either. Because, as the pillorying of Edwards bears witness, the media will gleefully use a choice against a struggling candidate. Clinton and Bush played the game right, with choices that enhanced their public persona without appearing nakedly manipulative.

So what can we learn about the current crop of Democratic candidates from their favorite books? And who might be the next Dukakis? I called each campaign to find out. There were plenty who chose to play it safe, perhaps spooked by the McCarthyite attack that greeted Edwards (though oddly no one chose Robert Caro—I figure the book's too long to finish). Richard Gephardt and Bob Graham both opted for David McCullough, *Truman* and *John Adams*, respectively. (Graham is also a fan of Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*.) John Kerry chose an image-softening volume of poetry (Pablo Neruda's *Twenty Love Poems and A Song of Despair*) along with a standard-issue "safe" book, Stephen Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage*, although Ambrose's penchant for plagiarism could set off media seismographs. Joe Lieberman, too, picked what would seem to be the ultimate safe choice: the Bible. "Oprah" viewers may recall that Al Gore himself once disparaged this answer as a cop-out, the one "everybody has to say."

Candidates' choices became more interesting—and more revealing—the longer their odds of winning the nomination. Apparently, neither Al Sharpton nor Dennis Kucinich spends much time reading, since neither produced a title despite repeated requests. Carol Moseley Braun, on the other hand, is a closet bookworm who insists she has no fewer than four favorites: Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Thomas's *The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher*, Katharine Graham's *Personal History*, and Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*. (Note to reporters: Try using the *Alice in Wonderland* choice to illustrate the logic behind Braun's choice to run.)

But the prize for the most interesting favorite book has to go to former Vermont governor Howard Dean. His choice of Ken Kesey's novel *Sometimes a Great Notion* is surely the bravest. After all, in this poll-tested, consultant-driven age, how many other candidates would confess—much less volunteer—to reading the work of an acid-dropping '60s counterculture hero? Here's hoping that the choice boosts Dean's emerging image as the straight-talking honest candidate, and that this diminutive liberal Northeastern governor doesn't wind up like the last one. ●

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The Health of Nations

Instead of forcing seniors into HMOs, how about forcing them to exercise?

BY PHILLIP J. LONGMAN

TO GET AN IDEA OF HOW WILDLY ineffective our health-care system is, consider this: The United States spends roughly $4,500 per person on health care each year. Costa Rica spends just $273. That small Central American country also has half as many doctors per capita as the United States. Yet the life expectancy of the average Costa Rican is virtually the same as the average American's: 76.1 years.

How can that be? According to public health researchers, the biggest reasons are behavior and environment. Costa Ricans consume about half as many cigarettes per person as we do. Not surprisingly, they are four times less likely to die of lung cancer. The car ownership rate in Costa Rica is a fraction of what it is in the United States. That not only means that fewer Costa Ricans die in auto accidents, but that they do a lot more walking, and hence they get more exercise. Thanks to a much lower McDonald's-to-citizen ratio, the average Costa Rican thrives on a traditional diet of rice, beans, fruits, vegetables, and a moderate amount of fried food—and therefore enjoys one of the world's lowest rates of heart disease and other stress-related illnesses.

The simple comparison between the health of Costa Ricans and Americans suggests a whole new way to think about how to fix America's increasingly dysfunctional health-care system—a system that these days seems to combine spiraling costs, declining coverage, and growing dissatisfaction with the quality of care. But instead of offering new ideas, both political parties in Washington are stuck in a hopeless rut, each trying to hawk plans that essentially expand the current system.

The battle over a Medicare prescription-drug benefit is a classic example. In March, President Bush unveiled a plan to provide partial drug discounts to all seniors, but full discounts only to those who leave traditional "fee-for-service" Medicare and join an HMO. Democrats derided the plan as a stealth attempt to "privatize" Medicare and argued instead for a much more generous plan that would give full discounts to all seniors, including those who remain in traditional Medicare.

Neither party seems to get it. Simply adding an expensive new benefit to a Medicare system whose costs are running out of control, as Democrats want to do, is fiscally irresponsible. Republicans, however, are deluded if they think funneling the elderly into HMOs will do much to cut health-care costs for long—HMO costs in the private sector are soaring. Moreover, when the Clinton administration experimented with a program to lure seniors into HMOs (Medicare+Choice), the result was chaos: Many HMOs went broke, others raised premiums, cut benefits, shifted costs, or simply dropped hundreds of thousands of seniors.

Both parties should pause and reflect. For all the additional money we're throwing into medicine, Americans aren't getting much healthier. Maybe it's time to try a different approach. The biggest opportunities for improving the health of Americans—and restraining health-care costs—lie in keeping people healthy, rather than treating them once they become sick. So instead of simply adding more benefits to a health-care system that is already financially unsustainable, or using new benefits to herd people into HMOs, why not offer a more sensible deal: Bribe people into taking better care of themselves. For instance, why not offer seniors who exercise bigger drug discounts than those who don't?

This may sound radical, and it is. But the more Americans learn about the costs and failings of contemporary

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medicine and the extraordinary benefits they can reap from simple behavioral changes like exercising, the more such plans will begin to make sense.

Government workers administer vaccination shots in 1917. In the last century, the greatest medical contributions to increasing life expectancies came from preventative campaigns.

Clean Living

To understand the value of this approach, it is important to clarify a common misperception about health care. During the 20th century, the health and life expectancy of the average American improved dramatically. A child born today can expect to live a full 30 years longer than one born in 1900. Improvements in medicine, however, played a surprisingly small role in this achievement. Public health experts agree that it contributed no more than five of those 30 years.

This may seem counterintuitive given the attention society pays to medical breakthroughs. But the changes in living and working conditions over the last century are the real reason. American cities at the turn of the last century stank of coal dust, manure, and rotting garbage. Most people still used latrines and outhouses. As recently as 1913, industrial accidents killed 23,000 Americans annually. Milk and meat were often spoiled; the water supply untreated. Trichinellosis, a dangerous parasite found in meat, infected 16 percent of the population, while food-borne bacteria such as salmonella, clostridium, and staphylococcus killed millions, especially children, 10 percent of whom died before their first birthday.

During the first half of the 20th century, living and working conditions improved vastly for most Americans. Workplace fatalities dropped 90 percent. This, combined with public health measures such as mosquito control, quarantines, and food inspections, led to dramatic declines in premature death. In 1900, 194 of every 100,000 U.S. residents died from tuberculosis. By 1940, before the advent of any effective medical treatment, reductions in overcrowded tenements combined with quarantine efforts had reduced the death rate by three-fourths.

As the century progressed, medical care grew enormously more sophisticated and effective, particularly in managing pain and preventing sudden death from traumatic injury, infection, and heart attack. But the overall gains to public health remained modest. The greatest gains came from strategic vaccination campaigns, which have virtually eliminated once-common diseases, including diphtheria, tetanus, poliomyelitis, smallpox, measles, mumps, rubella, and meningitis. But even these triumphs involved treating people before they became sick. Modern medicine's ability to actually cure people is quite depressing. The consensus estimate, accepted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), is that medicine has contributed just two of the seven years in added life expectancy achieved since 1950.

The reason is that, strictly speaking, medicine doesn't "save" lives, but extends them. If you're like my son, who spent the first 60 days of his life in a neonatal intensive care unit, medical intervention could extend your lifespan 90 years or more—but that number diminishes if you're 50, much more so if you're 90.

This gets at an important truth about the role medicine plays in public health—it is concentrated primarily on the elderly, who consume about 38 percent of all health-care dollars, yet account for just 12.4 percent of the population. By definition, the elderly have fewer years of life to extend than the young. This simple fact goes a long way toward explaining medicine's modest role in improving life expectancy: It cannot stop aging.

Sure, many best-sellers and newsweeklies tout the "longevity revolution" prompted by advances in cutting-edge medicine. But overall longevity is due more to dramatic reductions in infant mortality, which allow more people to grow old, than to modestly extended lives among the elderly. Since 1950, life expectancy at 65 has increased by just 3.45 years; among women over 65, it has actually *declined* slightly since 1992.

Domino's Theory

Another reason for the medical system's limited role in extending life is that, frankly, it kills so many people. Each year nearly two million patients in U.S. hospitals get

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an infection, about 90,000 of whom die as a result. According to the CDC, the largest preventable cause is doctors and nurses with dirty hands. Then there is the Institute of Medicine's well-publicized finding that "more people die in a given year as a result of medical errors than from motor vehicle accidents (43,458), breast cancer (42,297), or AIDS (16,516)." Such errors cause 2 to 4 percent of all deaths and derive not just from doctors' indecipherable handwriting or mix-ups in the lab, but also from a lack of the same kinds of systematic quality control procedures that are commonplace in workplaces from automakers to Domino's Pizza chains. Had the Institute considered deaths caused by medical errors outside of hospitals—in doctors' offices, pharmacies, or outpatient clinics—the fatality rate would be even higher.

Overmedication and adverse reactions to prescription drugs also cause unnecessary deaths. In 1994, these accounted for 106,000 deaths, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. More people are killed by adverse reactions to prescription drugs than by pulmonary disease or accidents. In fact, prescription drug deaths are surpassed only by heart disease, cancer, and stroke. The elderly, whose bodies often can't tolerate the dosages and combinations of pills doctors prescribe them, are particularly susceptible.

Moreover, many of the treatments the medical system provides are unnecessary, further limiting their effect. Consider the wide regional disparity in the intensity of care given to patients. In Miami, the average Medicare patient is treated by 25 specialists during the last six months of life; in Minneapolis, such patients see only four specialists. Yet the result is exactly the same: death within six months. Where specialists are abundant, they find elders to treat—and Medicare pays, spending, for example, $50,000 more per patient in Miami than Minneapolis, as my colleague Shannon Brownlee recently wrote in *The Atlantic*. But according to John Wennberg of Dartmouth Medical School, elder persons living in regions where the use of specialists is high have no greater life expectancy than their counterparts in regions where it is low. Wennberg and his colleagues estimate that nearly 20 percent of Medicare expenditures provide no benefit in terms of survival, nor does evidence show improvement in quality of life.

Then there is the growing problem of "pseudo-disease," defined by medical researchers Elliot S. Fischer and H. Gilbert Welch as "disease that would never become apparent to patients during their lifetime were it not for diagnostic tests." Most Americans have a binary view of illness: Either you have a disease or you don't. But the truth is often more subtle. Autopsy studies have shown that a third of adults have cancer cells in their thyroid; up to 40 percent of women in their 40s have ductal carcinoma in situ in their breasts; and half of men in their 60s have adenocarcinoma of the prostate. Yet each of the subjects died of other diseases. In other words, they died with their cancer, not from it, suggesting that many who have small cancers will never develop symptoms because they will die of something else before their cancers become noticeable.

Yet if your doctor discovers that you have cancer, there are two likely results: First, you will experience extraordinary and prolonged stress from the diagnosis, along with the attendant risks to health. Second, you and your doctor will try to fight the disease through radiation, chemotherapy, or surgery. Though it is difficult for a doctor and patient to know, even in terms of probability, whether such treatment is necessary, it is clear that for the broader population, the spread of diagnostic testing is causing an epidemic of "pseudo disease"—and vast commitments of medical resources that result in little, if any, gain in public health.

More medicine isn't extending our lives much. Since 1992, the life expectancy of American women at age 65 has actually *declined*.

But what if we could get doctors and nurses to wash their hands, fix the errors in the medical system, and adapt sensible, evidence-based medicine to prevent overtreatment, overmedication, and adverse drug reaction? This would dramatically improve our health-care system and prevent millions of deaths. But the overall effect on the health and life expectancy of Americans, and on the future demand for health care, would remain startlingly small. That's because the health-care system kicks in after most people are already ill. As the poet Joseph Malines aptly put it, it's like an ambulance waiting at the bottom of a cliff. By the time most people receive treatment, their bodies are already compromised by stress, indulgent habits, environmental dangers, and injury. As Maline wrote in his poem, "A Fence or an Ambulance": "If the cliff we will fence, we might almost dispense/ With the ambulance down in the valley."

Joint Survival

In a recent issue of *Health Affairs*, three researchers

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from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation examined scores of studies dating back to the 1970s on what factors cause people to die prematurely. They reported that genetic predispositions account for 30 percent of premature deaths; social circumstances, 15 percent; environmental exposures, 5 percent; behavioral patterns, 40 percent; and shortfalls in medical care, 10 percent. As they note, these proportions are easily misinterpreted. Ultimately, nearly everyone's health is determined by a combination of factors. For example, while only about 2 percent of human diseases are caused by inherited genetic mutations alone, nearly everyone carries various genetic dispositions that, when combined with a hazardous environment or unhealthy lifestyle, can contribute to ill health. But this only underscores the relatively small role medicine plays in preventing premature death.

As prohibition and the drug war demonstrate, simply criminalizing unhealthy behavior only goes so far.

Consider the startling difference in mortality between Utah and Nevada. These two contiguous states are similar in demographics, climate, access to health care, and average income. Yet Nevada's infant mortality rate is 40 percent higher than Utah's, and Nevada adults face an increased likelihood of premature death. As health-care economists Victor Fuchs and Nathan Rosenberg have pointed out, it's hard not to attribute much of that difference to the fact that 70 percent of Utah's population follows the strictures of the Mormon Church, which requires abstinence from tobacco, alcohol, premarital sex, and divorce. Nevada, with its freewheeling, laissez-faire culture, has the highest incidence of smoking-related death in the country; Utah the lowest. Utah has the nation's highest birthrate, but the lowest incidence of unwed teenage mothers. Culture and behavior seem to trump access to health care in improving human life span.

Similarly, when comparing life expectancy in the United States to other countries, it becomes clear that the vast sums we spend on health care buy very little health. The roughly $4,500 per person the United States spends annually on health care far outpaces any other country. Yet three-fourths of developed countries outrank America in life expectancy and infant mortality. Indeed, for all our high-tech medicine, Jamaican seniors outlive American seniors. According to the World Health Organization, life expectancy at age 65 is roughly equal, and at 85 it's longer in Jamaica. An argument for medical marijuana? No, it's an argument for walking. Dr. Denise Eldemire of the University of West Indies notes that 60 percent of Jamaica's elderly live in rural areas, where "walking is the only reliable means of transport." According to her studies, 78 percent of Jamaican elders walk daily. By contrast, just 60 percent of the entire U.S. adult population exercises at all.

Further evidence of medicine's limited effect is the slow pace of progress against cancer. The percentage of the U. S. population dying of cancer, while modestly improved in recent years, remains higher than in 1973, while the incidence of many specific forms of cancers, including non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, melanoma, and female breast and lung cancer have gotten worse. Headlines often celebrate how many more Americans are surviving cancer, but the underlying data offer little to cheer about. The five-year survival rate for men diagnosed with prostate cancer has improved—but mainly because doctors are able to detect it earlier, including cases that may never have proven lethal or been so only at advanced ages. The five-year survival rate for lung cancer is unchanged since the early 1970s. Breast cancer survival rates have improved by a matter of months, but like prostate cancer, much of this is due to earlier diagnosis, not to the success of treatment. Though there has been real progress in detecting and treating cancer, much of the claimed advance in survivability is really just an increase in the incidence of pseudo-disease. Cancer still kills 1,500 Americans a day.

Mortality from diabetes, liver, and kidney disease, meanwhile, has hardly changed since the 1960s—while infectious diseases continue to grow more numerous and deadly. Thirty years ago, the surgeon general declared it time to "close the book" on infectious disease. Since then, at least 20 that were once thought conquered, from tuberculosis to salmonella, have reemerged, while 29 new ones have been identified, including HIV/AIDS, Lyme disease, and hepatitis C. Meanwhile, antibiotic-resistant strains of all sorts of microbes are cropping up, largely because doctors keep dispensing antibiotics to treat what are actually viral infections.

In the face of such trends, even a Cadillac health-insurance plan plays little, if any, measurable role in improving health and life expectancy. A RAND Corpo-

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ration study compared two groups of families over 15 years, one with full medical coverage, the other with a large deductible. The families with full coverage consumed 40 percent more health-care dollars than the other groups, but researchers couldn't detect any measurable differences in health.

Death of a Salesman

These results may seem odd until one considers that the eight leading causes of death in the United States—heart disease, cancer, stroke, pulmonary diseases, accidents, pneumonia/influenza, diabetes, and suicide—are closely tied to living conditions and behavior. According to the Institute of Medicine, social and behavioral factors such as smoking, diet, alcohol use, and sedentary lifestyles contribute to approximately half of all deaths in this country. Scientists estimate that up to 75 percent of all cancer deaths result from behavior such as smoking, diet, and lack of exercise. Though modern medicine can help stave off death from such behavior, rarely can it mitigate these factors altogether. Chemotherapy, for example, may put a smoker's lung cancer into remission. But he'll continue to face the risk of dying from heart disease or other chronic conditions brought on by his behavior and environment—including the damage his body suffers from chemotherapy itself.

In contrast, large-scale changes in social arrangements or the environment do have profound effects on health. There is powerful statistical evidence, for instance, that hierarchy and inequality are among the major contributing causes of premature death. The first hint of this came in a famous 1967 study of British civil service workers, which found that, within a given office mortality rates would increase, step by step, as one moved down the organization chart. Those at the bottom suffered three times the death rate of those at the top. Since everyone had equal access to health care under Britain's universal, socialized system, the study suggested that one's socioeconomic status is a key determinant of health.

Bills of Health

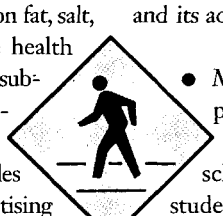
LAWMAKERS COULD DO MUCH more to improve public health if they wrote laws that stressed prevention rather than treatment. Here are a few ideas that may seem political nonstarters on their own, but, understood by the public as vital to their own personal health and well being, might well catch on:

- In addition to free needles, distribute free nicotine patches to any American who wants them. Following the example of private life insurance, give Medicare beneficiaries reduced premiums if they test negative for nicotine.

- Require the Food and Drug Administration to develop an operational definition of "junk food" based on fat, salt, and sugar content. Require health warnings on junk food, and subject it to sales taxes commensurate with those imposed on cigarettes and alcohol. Ban sales in school cafeterias and advertising on children's television. Ban the use of "Joe Camel" equivalents, such as Ronald McDonald, in junk-food advertising.

- Just as many municipalities limit concentrations of liquor stores, let's regulate the number of fast-food joints through licensure and zoning. Restaurants serving food that meets the FDA's definition of "junk" would require a license to operate, with the supply of new Burger Kings and McDonalds limited by regional quotas.

- Just as the Americans With Disabilities Act mandates setting aside parking spaces for the handicapped, let's mandate that new planned urban developments include a set length of sidewalks and trails per resident. Developments with more than 300 residents should have mandatory community centers (or bowling alleys or Starbucks) to combat social isolation and its adverse health effects.



- Mandate one hour of daily physical education in public schools. Limit the size of school districts so that most students can reasonably walk or bike to school. Redesignate more parking spaces at high schools as handicapped only.

- To reduce the adverse health effects of hierarchy and income inequality, make the compensation of executives who earn more than 30 times the average American wage no longer deductible from corporate taxable income. Repeal the regressive Medicare payroll tax. Increase the progressivity of the federal income tax, and finance Medicare through increased sin taxes, gas taxes, and general revenue.

- Just as federal regulation requires airlines to relay safety procedures to passengers before every flight, require doctors to recite to patients a short presentation, developed by the CDC, on the dangers of smoking, lack of exercise, drug abuse, and unprotected sex at the beginning of each consultation.

- Redirect the research agenda of the National Institutes of Health to put greater resources into studying the biological determinants of addiction, depression, and obesity. Canada's equivalent of NIH now directs research dollars away from high-tech research that, while possibly beneficial to individuals, does little or nothing to improve public health. —*PL*

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Since then, a cascade of studies has confirmed the relationship between equality and health. The healthiest states, such as Utah, Iowa, and New Hampshire, are also those with the least disparity of income, while states such as Louisiana, Mississippi, and New York lead the nation in both poor population health and income inequality. Similarly, wealthy nations with low income inequality, such as Sweden and Japan, have higher life expectancy than wealthy countries in which income is less evenly shared, such as the United States and Britain.

This phenomenon isn't associated simply with extreme concentrations of poverty or wealth. Across nations and races, under both single-payer systems that provide universal care and market-driven systems, life expectancy gradually increases according to socioeconomic status. There is a raging debate over why this is so. Some researchers suggest that a widening gap between the rich and everyone else leads to deepening stress, frustration, and ultimately self-destructive behavior among people struggling unsuccessfully toward the top. (Imagine the unhappy American salesman who relieves his stress with booze, cigarettes, and occasionally compulsive unprotected sex with strangers.) Others speculate that political support for government services critical to health, such as clean water and police protection, erodes when too many of a society's resources are controlled by a narrow elite.

Others turn the question on its head, suggesting that the rich get ahead because they are, on average, healthier than everyone else to begin with and smart enough to know how to stay that way. Or it may be that education plays a key role, too. Those who do well in school may learn a greater awareness of how to lead a healthy life, and they may also have greater discipline and ability to defer gratification. In any event, those with a bright financial future certainly have more to lose, in a monetary sense at least, by indulging in unhealthy behavior.

But there is one point of agreement among all serious students of public health, which is that environment and social conditions play an overwhelming role in determining the prevalence of diseases and premature death. Indeed, a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* estimates that 40 percent of all deaths are caused by behavior patterns that could be prevented. And yet, approximately 95 percent of the $1 trillion dollars the nation spends on health goes for direct medical care services to individuals. Only 5 percent goes for measures designed to promote more healthy behavior among the population as a whole.

Most Americans appropriately resent government penalizing their lifestyle choices. That's why, instead of punishing citizens for unhealthy behavior, government should pay you to clean up your act.

Deadly Suburbs

Persuading Americans to take better care of themselves is no easy task. As prohibition and the drug war demonstrate, simply criminalizing unhealthy behavior goes only so far. Moreover, most of the unhealthy behavior we're talking about—say, eating Big Macs—shouldn't be criminalized in the first place. Imposing "sin" taxes, while somewhat effective, can only do so much without creating black markets. And most Americans are appropriately resentful of government efforts to penalize them for lifestyle choices. That's why, instead of punishing citizens for unhealthy behavior, the government should concentrate on reducing the major environmental causes of premature death—not just pollution, but poverty and hazardous living conditions—while also paying you to clean up your act. Here are three ideas on how to do it:

Drugs for Jumping Jacks: The benefits to older people of even moderate exercise are overwhelming. As a report sponsored by the AARP and other health and aging groups concludes: "Scientific evidence increasingly indicates that physical activity can extend years of active independent life, reduce disability, and improve the quality of life for older persons." And yet approximately 34 percent of those ages 50 and older are sedentary, and fewer than half of older adults report that their physician has suggested exercise.

Meanwhile, with Medicare's insolvency looming in 2030, both political parties are competing to offer a plan that would subsidize prescription drugs for seniors. These plans attempt to meet a real problem: Higher prescription drug costs are eating away at the economic well being of many moderate-income seniors. There's little evidence, however, that such an entitlement would increase longevity. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, only 2 percent of the

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nation's elderly report being unable to obtain a needed prescription drug even once in the course of the year. Moreover, an estimated 17 percent of all hospital admissions among persons over 70 result from harmful combinations of prescriptions drugs. Overmedication in hospitals and nursing homes is a leading form of elder abuse.

So if we're going to expand Medicare to cover prescription drugs, let's extract a quid pro quo to help defray the cost while giving seniors more years of active, independent life: offer every American over 50 a voucher to join a gym or exercise program. Those who use it and can demonstrate attendance will become entitled to heavily subsidized prescription drugs, regardless of financial need—think of it as drugs for jumping jacks. So will those too frail to exercise. But let those who are willfully unhealthy pay for their own drugs.

Death by Sprawl: On a statistical basis, what's most likely to get you killed in the next year: (A) living in Israel during the Intifada; (B) living in crime-ridden, inner-city Baltimore, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Milwaukee, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Philadelphia, or Pittsburgh; or (C) living in the bucolic outer suburbs of those cities? The answer is overwhelmingly C. A recent study by University of Virginia professor William H. Lucy found that Americans' migration into sprawling outer suburbs is actually a huge cause of premature death. In the suburbs, you're less likely to be killed by a stranger—unless you count strangers driving cars. Residents of inner-city Houston, for example, face about a 1.5 in 10,000 chance of being killed in the coming year by either a murderous stranger or in an automobile accident. But in the Houston suburb of Montgomery County, residents are 50 percent more likely to die from one of those two causes because the incidence of automobile accidents is so much higher.

Sprawling, auto-dependent suburbs are unhealthy in other ways, too. In such an environment, almost no one walks—and for good reason. In 1999, 4,906 pedestrians died, 873 of them children under 14. Not surprisingly, metro areas marked by sprawling development and a high degree of auto dependency—Orlando, Tampa, West Palm Beach, and Memphis, among others—are the most dangerous regions to walk in.

But rarely walking or riding a bike can also be deadly. Largely because of sprawl, the number of trips people take on foot has dropped by 42 percent in the last 20 years. This is particularly true among children. In 1977, children ages 5 to 15 walked or biked 15.8 percent of the time. By 1995, the rate dropped to only 9.9 percent. Seventy percent of all trips children take today are in the back seats of cars. So sprawl not only substantially increases the odds of dying in an auto crash, it also discourages routine exercise.

This is no small matter. Walking 10 blocks or more per day reduces the chance of heart disease in women by a third. The risks associated with a sedentary lifestyle rival those of hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes, and even smoking. According to the surgeon general, the economic costs of obesity total $117 billion a year, about 9.4 percent of health-care spending. Americans who never exercise cost the health-care system $76.6 billion a year. Sprawl does not fully account for our increasingly sedentary lives, but it is a major factor, and therefore a leading cause of premature death.

Sprawl also leads to high levels of social isolation, which has its own public-health implications. Lonely individuals who are cut off from regular contact with friends and neighbors face highly elevated risks for heart diseases and other disorders. What's cause and effect is not entirely clear, but Robert Putnam, a professor of public policy at Harvard University, has found that an isolated individual's chances of dying over the next year fall by half if he joins a group, two-thirds if he joins two.

The good news is that reducing subsidies for sprawl is among the biggest policy levers available to improve public health. This includes reforming gas taxes that are currently nowhere near high enough to recoup the environmental costs of driving, let alone to compensate for the losses to the economy caused by auto-related deaths and injuries. And it includes ending overinvestment in new roads and highways, and directing more toward mass transit, bike trails, and sidewalks. Thanks to the surgeon general's warnings and vastly increased tobacco taxes, millions of Americans have overcome their addiction to nicotine. It's equally important for the federal government to warn Americans about the health hazards of auto-dependent sprawl and provide financial incentives to encourage a healthier environment and lifestyle.

Instead of paying a fare, for example, transit users should receive a dollar's credit on their swipe cards for up to three rides a day, financed by drivers who will enjoy less traffic, cleaner air, and a smaller burden on the health care system. The government could also offer greater home mortgage deductions to homeowners who move to cities and developments served by mass transit. These measures might at first seem politically unfeasible, but presented to an aging population as a way to improve public health and fix a failing health-care system, they may gain real political traction.

The Americans Without Disabilities Act: The Americans With Disability Act mandates everything from

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how parking lots and public bathrooms are arranged to how employers organize workplaces. Yet it does nothing to prevent disability. Why not adapt parallel legislation that would prevent Americans from becoming disabled in the first place?

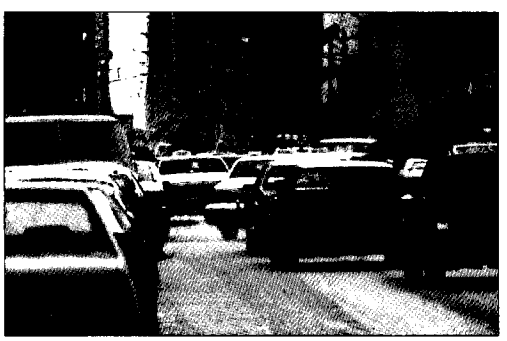
For instance, the National Cancer Institute recommends at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day—but prices for fruits and vegetables have increased more than any other food category in recent years. Expand the Food Stamp program so that everyone is entitled to generous, free weekly allowances of fruits and vegetables. Or how about creating an Interstate Bicycle Highway System using abandoned railroad right-of-way? Instead of charging tolls, pay cyclists according to the number of miles they've pedaled. Or how about mandating that companies that employ 25 or more workers provide on-site exercise rooms or tax-free benefits to cover gym membership? Or offer a $200-a-month benefit increase to obese welfare recipients who shed at least 20 pounds, using the subsequent decrease in Medicaid expenditures to meet the cost? The ideas are practically limitless (see sidebar).

How might American life change for the better if we took this approach? Consider the problem of the uninsured. Currently, the cost of health care is outpacing economic growth, so maintaining the number of insured people would seem enough of a challenge. But the question of what health care costs depends overwhelmingly on how much is needed—and that is determined largely by how Americans conduct their lives. How fat are we? How sedentary? How much pollution do we create? How much do we suffer from loneliness, depression, and social isolation? How much do we smoke, drink, or abuse drugs? How productively do we age? What the Costa Rican example shows us is that with the right behavioral changes in lifestyle and social environment, we too could lower health-care costs—maybe not to $273 per person, but low enough to afford universal health-care access. And Americans wouldn't even need to forego superfluous treatments; Costa Rica boasts world-class plastic surgeons and cosmetic dentists and still offers free universal health.

That would, however, require more time walking. And some of us would have to be bribed to take better care of ourselves. And there would be big expenses for building better transit systems, and more compact, socially cohesive, less-polluted communities. But which system seems like the better bargain?

Death by Sprawl?

The number of trips Americans take on foot has dropped by 42 percent in the last 20 years.



Greek Hygiene

There are clear signs that Americans are becoming fed up with the current health-care system and open to bold new approaches. Marcus Welby would be shocked, for example, to know what Americans think of doctors these days. In the late 1960s, when of millions of viewers tuned in to watch the avuncular M.D. offer sage advice to his patients about the root causes of their illnesses, more than 70 percent of Americans had confidence in medical leaders; today, only 40 percent trust doctors. A mere 29 percent of the public agrees with the statement: "The health-care system would work better if doctors had full control of the system."

And it seems the more people know about health care, the less faith they have in doctors and their remedies. While half the public now says it lacks trust in "scientific solutions" for health care, nearly 80 percent of health-care policy professionals share this doubt. According to a study that appeared recently in the medical journal, *Milbank Quarterly*, the largest single factor driving down trust in doctors—among the general public, but especially among health-care-policy experts—is mounting concern about the ineffectiveness of modern medicine.

In Greek mythology, the god of medicine, Asclepios, had two daughters. Hygeia was the daughter responsible for prevention, while, Panacea was responsible for cure. Today, to the detriment of our nation's health, we're fixated on the idea that medicine will produce a panacea. It's time to listen to her more powerful sister.

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Plane Threat

Terrorists have never shot down an American passenger jet with surface-to-air missiles. But it's only a matter of time.

BY SOYOUNG HO

LATE LAST NOVEMBER, TWO SLENDER metal tubes arced into the Kenyan air, streaking toward a charter aircraft that had just taken off, laden with Israeli tourists, from the Mombasa airport. Fired by suspected al Qaeda operatives, the Soviet-made missiles missed their target—leaving passengers relieved, and Americans suddenly aware of yet another terrorist threat. It may be new to them, but it's not to security analysts. Since the 1980s, shoulder-launched missiles have been fired at commercial airliners roughly twice a year, and even more frequently since September 11. And while terrorists haven't yet managed to blow up a nuclear power plant or detonate a dirty bomb, over the last 30 years, according to *Jane's*, the respected defense publication, such missiles have brought down enough charter, medical, or cargo planes flying over conflict zones to kill 900 people. More than two dozen guerrilla and terrorist groups are known to possess them. "If it has happened before, certainly we have to think ... that it will be tried again," says Brian Jenkins, a terrorism expert at the RAND Corporation.

How big is the threat? For all the fear they inspired, last year's anthrax attacks killed just four people, while 1995's sarin gas attack in Tokyo, perpetrated by a Japanese cult, cost only 11 lives—terrible, to be sure, but illustrative of the relative difficulty of employing chemical and biological agents as weapons of mass destruction. By contrast, a single shoulder-fired missile could take down a Boeing 747, killing up to 500 people. And last May, the FBI warned American law-enforcement agencies that terrorist cells may already have smuggled such weapons into the United States. Yet the attention paid to this threat is minuscule compared with that of chemical, nuclear, and biological weapons. Legislation, proposed by the Senate, requiring all U.S. airlines to retrofit their passenger jets with antimissile countermeasures has met a tepid response. Meanwhile, top administration officials almost never talk about this threat. And for all the pressure it has put on other countries to check the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons, the administration has done little to keep these deadly yet economical weapons out of the hands of terrorists. Even worse, it has done a few things that might make the eventuality more likely.

Menace in a Golf Bag

Known technically as Man-Portable Air Defense Systems, or MANPADS, such missiles are in some ways an ideal weapon for the al Qaedas of the world. They are far more powerful than most small arms, and can strike from a distance, enabling would-be terrorists to inflict great damage at minimal risk. Small and light at about 35 pounds, they're easily smuggled. (With 20,000 uninspected cargo containers coming into U.S. ports every day, and fairly porous land borders, says Jenkins, "How difficult can it be for something that fits in a golf bag?") Nor are such weapons hard to find. The world's arsenals boast an estimated 500,000, from American Stingers to Russian Strelas; 5,000 to 10,000 of these are unaccounted for, including between 300 and 600 American-made Stingers delivered by the CIA to Afghan mujaheddin in the 1980s. (When the Soviet-Afghan war ended in 1989, the CIA tried to buy some of them back, but only with limited success.)

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Some 56 countries are known to have the SA-7, a widely-copied, 1960s vintage Soviet model. Another 20 own variations on the American Stinger. Pakistan, North Korea, China, and Egypt all manufacture variants on U.S. or Russian missiles. For terrorists seeking reasonably high body counts and wider ripples of fear and chaos, taking down a commercial airliner would do nicely, disrupting air travel and tourism as 9/11 did. "Al Qaeda, in particular, likes to destroy symbols of American economic power and global domination," notes Alan Kuperman, a professor of international relations at Johns Hopkins University. "Destroying American aircraft, especially overseas, would fit the bill quite well."

So if they have the means and motivation, why haven't terrorists brought down an American 747? For a missile attack to be successful, an individual or group needs three things: missiles, motivation, and opportunity. And it's not easy to get all three at the same time.

One simple reason shoulder-launched missiles haven't often been used against commercial airliners is that, until recently, it was simply easier to hijack a plane. But as airlines installed metal detectors and better airport security during the 1970s, hijackings became harder to pull off: There were 72 in 1969, but only seven in 1998. In-flight bombs, like the one that brought down Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, began to replace hijackings (9/11 notwithstanding).

If terrorists were willing to use bombs, why not missiles? Here, too, the answer is that getting a bomb on a plane has been technically easier than downing it with a portable missile. Such missiles are more complex and delicate than simple timed bombs. Indeed, many of the shoulder-fired missiles.most widely available on the black market are older models nearing the end of their shelf life. Over time, crucial components such as battery cooling units wear down. And although these can be replaced, refitting surface-to-air missiles isn't quite as simple as popping in a few Duracells. The end result is that terrorists wind up with more than a few duds. During the 1980s, Libya supplied a dozen SA-7Bs to the Irish Republican Army, but most turned out to be unusable. When U.S. troops raided al Qaeda strongholds in Afghanistan, they found shoulder-fired missiles piled up in caves, their fuses and other parts corroded or damaged. So it's not surprising that, out of the 1,250 aviation terrorist incidents catalogued by RAND since 1968, only 42 have involved shoulder-fired missiles. Since 9/11, a total of five missiles have been fired at civilian airliners—two in Kenya, one in Saudi Arabia, and two in the Czech Republic. All five either missed or misfired.

Even when the missiles aren't defective, they're not easy to operate. It's not as if Joe Terrorist can wander down to the local range and fire off a couple of practice shots. Before the mujaheddin received training by CIA operatives, they had significant trouble hitting Soviet aircraft with their U.S.-supplied Stingers. Most shoulder-fired missiles sitting in arsenals today have a range of 11,000 to 15,000 feet. Since that's far lower than the 40,000 feet airliners normally cruise at, terrorists must fire off the weapon while planes are taking off or landing. Likewise, the missiles still most widely available, SA-7s, have to be launched from behind an aircraft so that their targeting mechanisms can lock onto the heat emitted from a plane's engines. SA-7s also can't maneuver once in the air, making it relatively easy for pilots to take evasive action and avoid being hit.

During the Yom Kippur war of 1973, according to a U.S. Air Force report, Arab armies fired more than 5,000 SA-7 rounds against Israeli Air Force ground-attack aircraft, but shot down only 30 planes. Even today, as a general rule, the best soldiers trained in the missile's use only hit about 70 percent of their targets in combat. And civilian jumbo jets, while bigger and slower-moving than fighters, can actually be harder to bring down with shoulder-fired missiles, since they can usually still fly after losing one or two engines. Of those aforementioned 42 attempts against non-military aircraft, about a dozen were successful. But only twice have larger commercial passenger jets been brought down—once in 1993, when Abkhazian rebels in Georgia shot down a Russian airliner, killing 106 passengers; and once in 1983, when UNITA rebels in Angola claimed to have bought down another such aircraft, killing 130.

No one has ever taken down an American airliner with a shoulder-fired missile, in part because American airlines do a good job staying out of trouble. Most anti-American terrorists operate out of countries that don't get a lot of U.S. airliner flights. Of the groups known to both have the missiles and target Americans, few target civilians en masse. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front, though affiliated with al Qaeda, limits its scope of operation to the southern Philippines, where few Americans venture by plane. Hezbollah famously attacked the American embassy and U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, and was involved in the 1996 attacks on a Air Force barracks in Saudi Arabia, but generally shies away from going after American civilians.

For that matter, American intelligence and law enforcement agencies have actually been pretty good at nipping missile attacks in the bud. Over the years, the FBI has prevented the real IRA from obtaining Stingers in the United States and blocked Muammar Qaddafi's attempt to provide rocket launchers to an Islamist street

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gang in Chicago. More recently, last November, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced that two attempts to exchange drugs for cash and Stingers were foiled; in one case, the missiles were destined for al Qaeda camps.

Jam the Attackers

That's the good news. The bad news is that, to some extent, each of these barriers to entry is slowly crumbling. Since 9/11, for instance, the United States has made major strides tightening up airport security, from scanning luggage to searching passengers to a new program that would allow pilots to carry sidearms. But the harder we make it to hijack or place bombs on airliners, the more incentive terrorists have to try something else—like shoulder-fired missiles.

Advances in missile technology, meanwhile, mean that should terrorists attempt to shoot down an airliner, they'll be more likely to succeed. The latest models, manufactured primarily by the United States, Russia, Japan, and France, have ranges of over 22,000 feet. That means terrorists can fire from farther away; it also means that airliners are vulnerable during a longer portion of their takeoffs and landings. The new missiles are also more agile, so that, once launched, they're better able to home in on the target and counter the pilot's attempts to evade. Finally, they're able to close in on aircraft from any direction, not just from behind—giving would-be terrorists greater flexibility in choosing a secure place from which to fire.

That doesn't mean shoulder-launched missiles can't be countered. Under legislation proposed by Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), airlines would oufit their planes with electronic devices that would jam the attackers' guidance systems. And other countermeasures can be deployed, from tighter security around airfields (thus forcing the rocketeers to fire at a higher and shorter sector of the aircraft's path) to scheduling more flights at night (when planes are harder to target). Airports could also reduce the number of flight paths and deploy aerial buoys—basically big balloons broadcasting IR and UV static—along those that remain, providing a curtain of sorts that would interfere with missiles' targeting systems.

But in the long run, it's a lot more efficient to keep the missiles out of terrorists' hands than to defend thousands of airplanes and hundreds of airports. Unfortunately, new-model missiles have already been copied or acquired by Pakistan, North Korea, China, and Egypt, countries that have been willing to export military technology—and very irresponsibly—in the past. And when it comes to rogue regimes, like North Korea or Iran, "There's not much that you can do about proliferation," says Lt. Cmdr. Jim Brooks, a public affairs officer at the Defense Intelligence Agency. The sale of missiles is perfectly legal between states, and Pyongyang won't exactly issue press statements should it decide to sell the equipment to Iran, which, in turn, could hand it to Hezbollah or Hamas. Aside from lodging protests, the next step is military action, such as the United States' interception last year of a North Korean ship carrying Scud missiles to Yemen. But as missiles proliferate, they'll be harder to interdict.

The Bush administration has at least acknowledged the problem. After the attacks in Kenya, they belatedly convened an interagency task force to study the problem, and according to one State Department official, sought to persuade foreign governments to destroy some of the missiles in their arsenal, and to take more stringent measures against the theft of the rest. But other White House policies have undercut these efforts. Preventing missiles from proliferating requires foreign countries to more carefully guard their own arsenals and track down terrorists who may have already acquired such weapons. Right now, as a result of the administration's penchant for overbearing "diplomacy," most countries are not in the mood to help. And the White House's evident disdain for arms-control treaties makes it unlikely that Bush would ever seek an international agreement to more tightly regulate shoulder-fired missiles. (Currently, the United States is party to the so-called Wassenaar Arrangement, which in theory binds countries to keep close track of arms sales in general and shoulder-fired missiles in particular. Unfortunately, states *not* party to the agreement include China, North Korea, India, Pakistan, and all of the Central Asian republics.)

Finally, we must factor in the unforeseeable effects of any war against Iraq. The administration clearly believes that taking out Saddam will send an unequivocal message to state sponsors of terrorism. Since sympathetic regimes are the best source for hardware and training for terrorists, the invasion could in theory lessen the threat from these weapons. On the other hand, the invasion is likely to inflame existing terrorist networks, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, that haven't before made a habit of targeting American civilians. Both groups are known to possess SA-7s (and possibly more advanced models), and have operational capacity within the United States. So far, when it comes to the threat of shoulder-launched missiles, the United States has been fortunate. In the future, we may not be so lucky. ●

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Who's Who

BY SUSAN THREADGILL

Who will rule Iraq when the shooting stops? The Bush administration has already announced that retired Gen. **Jay Garner** will head the Pentagon's new Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance. But Garner has maintained a low profile since his appointment in February—and for good reason. Until January, he was president of SY Coleman, a defense contractor that manufactures many of the missile systems that are being fired on Iraq. Then there's **Michael Mobbs**, a Pentagon lawyer whom the administration has tapped to head the civil government. He is best known for drafting the so-called Mobbs Declaration, which states that the president has wide latitude to indefinitely detain American citizens alleged to be enemy combatants, without charge or counsel.

So who will be the next **Norman Schwarzkopf** or **Wesley Clark**—the telegenic general taking a star turn—of Gulf War II? Army insiders say that Lt. Gen. **John P. Abizaid** is a good bet. Abizaid, who holds a master's degree in Middle Eastern studies from Harvard and studied at the University of Jordan, was recently appointed top deputy to Gen. **Tommy Franks**, head of U.S. forces in the Gulf, and seems groomed for success—in addition to being a favorite of **Donald Rumsfeld**, Abizaid speaks fluent Arabic.

Will *The New Republic* endorse **George W. Bush** for president in 2004? That's what some of the magazine's long-suffering liberal readers feared after a Feb. 24 **Howard Kurtz** article in *The Washington Post* speculated that, given *TNR*'s hawkish foreign policy views and **Al Gore**'s decision not to run again, a Bush endorsement was "not inconceivable." But *TNR* insiders tell us there is "no possibility of that happening."

Much of Washington is puzzling over the mysterious behavior of **Kevin J. Martin**, a Republican member of the Federal Communications Commission. In February, Martin voted with Democratic members to block a major effort to "deregulate" (i.e. enhance the monopoly power of) local phone companies. The "deregulation" plan was the centerpiece of FCC Chairman **Michael Powell**'s sweeping new agenda for the telecommunications industry. Powell—son of **Colin Powell**—is so infuriated that some close observers think he may resign.

So why did Martin do it? After all, he's a handpicked George W. Bush loyalist who's tight with the vice president's office—his wife, **Catherine Jurgensmeyer Martin**, is **Dick Cheney**'s chief of staff. And the White House itself seemed to back the "deregulation" plan that would have helped the Baby Bells, and, in turn, GOP fundraising efforts. One theory is that the White House no longer believes in shoveling favors to giant corporations (OK, it's just a theory!). Another is that Martin is an honest man. A third is that Martin is acting at the behest of Cheney to spite his archenemy, Colin Powell.

According to Beltway insiders, **Richard Haass,** a protégé whom Powell installed as head of policy and planning at the State Department soon after Bush took office, will soon quit his post to replace **Leslie H. Gelb** as head of the Council on Foreign Relations. Rumor has it that Haass has had enough of the endless struggle between Powell's camp and that of the hawks, led by Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. If Haass leaves, it'll be a blow to Powell, and a sign of his declining influence within the administration.

For the past few months, a new coalition of liberal Democratic senators calling themselves the Democratic Study Group—named after a much-admired House research unit killed off by then-Speaker **Newt Gingrich** (R-Ga.) during the 1990s—has been holding weekly brainstorming sessions. Though they've been low key, the group, led by Sen. **Dick Durbin** (D-Ill.), has managed to sell some of its tactical ideas to the leadership, with impressive results. For instance, they convinced Sen. **Tom Daschle** (D-S.D.) and Rep. **Nancy Pelosi** (D-Calif.) to deliver major speeches whacking Bush's economic plan before the president had even formally announced it in his State of the Union address. This new policy of preemption helped shape the generally negative press coverage Bush's plan subsequently received. Members of the group also held up the nomination of Treasury Secretary **John Snow** until the administration agreed to temporarily sideline a Treasury regulation that would have allowed corporations to raid pension plans. Such clever, brass-knuckle moves are drawing converts. The group, which started with fewer than half a dozen senators, now boasts more than 20, including Sens. **Jack Reed** (D-R.I.), **Barbara Boxer** (D-Calif.), **Ted Kennedy** (D-Mass.), **Charles Schumer** (D-N.Y.), and **Debbie Stabenow** (D-Mich.).

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Practice to Deceive

Chaos in the Middle East isn't the Bush-hawks' nightmare scenario it's their plan

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IMAGINE IT'S SIX MONTHS FROM NOW. The Iraq war is over. After an initial burst of joy and gratitude at being liberated from Saddam's rule, the people of Iraq are watching, and waiting, and beginning to chafe under American occupation. Across the border, in Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, our conquering presence has brought street protests and escalating violence. The United Nations and NATO are in disarray, so America is pretty much on its own. Hemmed in by budget deficits at home and limited financial assistance from allies, the Bush administration is talking again about tapping Iraq's oil reserves to offset some of the costs of the American presence—talk that is further inflaming the region. Meanwhile, U.S. intelligence has discovered fresh evidence that, prior to the war, Saddam moved quantities of biological and chemical weapons to Syria. When Syria denies having such weapons, the administration starts massing troops on the Syrian border. But as they begin to move, there is an explosion: Hezbollah terrorists from southern Lebanon blow themselves up in a Baghdad restaurant, killing dozens of Western aid workers and journalists. Knowing that Hezbollah has cells in America, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge puts the nation back on Orange Alert. FBI agents start sweeping through mosques, with a new round of arrests of Saudis, Pakistanis, Palestinians, and Yemenis.

To most Americans, this would sound like a frightening state of affairs, the kind that would lead them to wonder how and why we had got ourselves into this mess in the first place. But to the Bush administration hawks who are guiding American foreign policy, this isn't the nightmare scenario. It's everything going as anticipated.

In their view, invasion of Iraq was not merely, or even primarily, about getting rid of Saddam Hussein. Nor was it really about weapons of mass destruction, though their elimination was an important benefit. Rather, the administration sees the invasion as only the first move in a wider effort to reorder the power structure of the entire Middle East. Prior to the war, the president himself never quite said this openly. But hawkish neoconservatives within his administration gave strong hints. In February, Undersecretary of State John Bolton told Israeli officials that after defeating Iraq, the United States would "deal with" Iran, Syria, and North Korea. Meanwhile, neoconservative journalists have been channeling the administration's thinking. Late last month, *The Weekly Standard*'s Jeffrey Bell reported that the administration has in mind a "world war between the United States and a political wing of Islamic fundamentalism ... a war of such reach and magnitude [that] the invasion of Iraq, or the capture of top al Qaeda commanders, should be seen as tactical events in a series of moves and countermoves stretching well into the future."

In short, the administration is trying to roll the table—to use U.S. military force, or the threat of it, to reform or topple virtually every regime in the region, from foes like Syria to friends like Egypt, on the theory that it is the undemocratic nature of these regimes that ultimately breeds terrorism. So events that may seem negative—Hezbollah for the first time targeting American civilians; U.S. soldiers preparing for war with Syria—while unfortunate in themselves, are actually part of the hawks' broader agenda. Each crisis will draw U.S. forces further into the region and each countermove in turn will create problems that can only be fixed by still further American involvement, until democratic governments—or, failing that, U.S. troops—rule the entire Middle East.

There is a startling amount of deception in all this—of hawks deceiving the American people, and perhaps in some cases even themselves. While it's conceivable that bold American action could democratize the Middle East, so broad and radical an initiative could also bring chaos and bloodshed on a massive scale. That all too real possibility leads most establishment foreign policy hands, including many in the State Department, to view the Bush plan with alarm. Indeed, the hawks' record so far does not inspire confidence. Prior to the invasion, for instance, they predicted that if the United States simply

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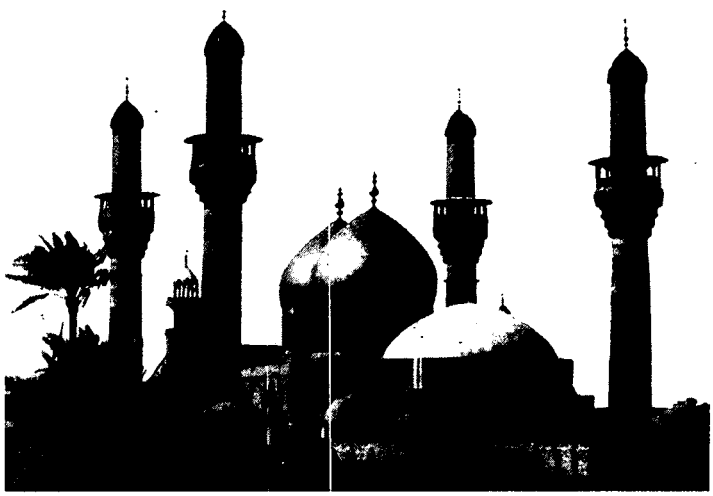
announced its intention to act against Saddam regardless of how the United Nations voted, most of our allies, eager to be on our good side, would support us. Almost none did. Yet despite such grave miscalculations, the hawks push on with their sweeping new agenda.

Like any group of permanent Washington revolutionaries fueled by visions of a righteous cause, the neocons long ago decided that criticism from the establishment isn't a reason for self-doubt but the surest sign that they're on the right track. But their confidence also comes from the curious fact that much of what could go awry with their plan will also serve to advance it. A full-scale confrontation between the United States and political Islam, they believe, is inevitable, so why not have it now, on our terms, rather than later, on theirs? Actually, there are plenty of good reasons not to purposely provoke a series of crises in the Middle East. But that's what the hawks are setting in motion, partly on the theory that the worse things get, the more their approach becomes the only plausible solution.



Moral Cloudiness

Ever since the neocons burst upon the public policy scene 30 years ago, their movement has been a marriage of moral idealism, military assertiveness, and deception. Back in the early 1970s, this group of then-young and still mostly Democratic political intellectuals grew alarmed by the post-Vietnam Democrats' seeming indifference to the Soviet threat. They were equally appalled, however, by the amoral worldview espoused by establishment Republicans like Henry Kissinger, who sought co-existence with the Soviet Union. As is often the case with ex-socialists, the neocons were too familiar with communist tactics to ignore or romanticize communism's evils. The fact that many neocons were Jewish, and outraged by Moscow's increasingly visible persecution of Jews, also caused them to reject both the McGovernite and Kissingerian tendencies to ignore such abuses.

In Ronald Reagan, the neocons found a politician they could embrace. Like them, Reagan spoke openly about the evils of communism and, at least on the peripheries of the Cold War, preferred rollback to coexistence. Neocons filled the Reagan administration, and men like Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Frank Gaffney, and others provided the intellectual ballast and moral fervor for the sharp turn toward confrontation that the United States adopted in 1981.

But achieving moral clarity often requires hiding certain realities. From the beginning, the neocons took a much more alarmist view of Soviet capacities and intentions than most experts. As late as 1980, the ur-neocon Norman Podhoretz warned of the imminent "Finlandization of America, the political and economic subordination of the United States to superior Soviet power," even raising the possibility that America's only options might be "surrender or war." We now know, of course, that U.S. intelligence estimates, which many neocons thought underestimated the magnitude and durability of Soviet power, in fact wildly overestimated them.

This willingness to deceive—both themselves and others—expanded as neocons grew more comfortable with power. Many spent the Reagan years orchestrating bloody wars against Soviet proxies in the Third World, portraying thugs like the Nicaraguan Contras and plain murderers like Jonas Savimbi of Angola as "freedom fighters." The nadir of this deceit was the Iran-Contra scandal, for which Podhoretz's son-in-law, Elliot Abrams, pled guilty to perjury. Abrams was later pardoned by Bush's father, and today, he runs Middle East policy in the Bush White House.

But in the end, the Soviet Union did fall. And the hawks' policy of confrontation did contribute to its collapse. So too, of course, did the economic and military rot most of the hawks didn't believe in, and the reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev, whom neocons such as Richard Perle counseled Reagan not to trust. But the neocons did not dwell on what they got wrong. Rather, the experience of having played a hand in the downfall of so great an evil led them to the opposite belief: that it's okay to be spectacularly wrong, even brazenly deceptive about the details, so long as you have moral vision and a will-

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ingness to use force.

What happened in the 1990s further reinforced that mindset. Hawks like Perle and William Kristol pulled their hair out when Kissingerians like Brent Scowcroft and Colin Powell left Saddam's regime in place after the first Gulf War. They watched with mounting fury as terrorist attacks by Muslim fundamentalists claimed more and more American and Israeli lives. They considered the Oslo accords an obvious mistake (how can you negotiate with a man like Yasir Arafat?), and as the decade progressed they became increasingly convinced that there was a nexus linking burgeoning terrorism and mounting anti-Semitism with repressive but nominally "pro-American" regimes like Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In 1996, several of the hawks—including Perle—even tried to sell Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the idea that Israel should attack Saddam on its own—advice Netanyahu wisely declined. When the Oslo process crumbled and Saudi Arabian terrorists killed 3,000 Americans on 9/11, the hawks felt, not without some justification, that they had seen this danger coming all along, while others had ignored it. The timing was propitious, because in September 2001 many already held jobs with a new conservative president willing to hear their pitch.

If free elections were held in Saudi Arabia today, Osama bin Laden would probably win more votes than Crown Prince Abdullah.

Prime Minister bin Laden

The pitch was this: The Middle East today is like the Soviet Union 30 years ago. Politically warped fundamentalism is the contemporary equivalent of communism or fascism. Terrorists with potential access to weapons of mass destruction are like an arsenal pointed at the United States. The primary cause of all this danger is the Arab world's endemic despotism, corruption, poverty, and economic stagnation. Repressive regimes channel dissent into the mosques, where the hopeless and disenfranchised are taught a brand of Islam that combines anti-modernism, anti-Americanism, and a worship of violence that borders on nihilism. Unable to overthrow their own authoritarian rulers, the citizenry turns its fury against the foreign power that funds and supports these corrupt regimes to maintain stability and access to oil: the United States. As Johns Hopkins University professor Fouad Ajami recently wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, "The great indulgence granted to the ways and phobias of Arabs has reaped a terrible harvest"—terrorism. Trying to "manage" this dysfunctional Islamic world, as Clinton attempted and Colin Powell counsels us to do, is as foolish, unproductive, and dangerous as détente was with the Soviets, the hawks believe. Nor is it necessary, given the unparalleled power of the American military. Using that power to confront Soviet communism led to the demise of that totalitarianism and the establishment of democratic (or at least non-threatening) regimes from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea to the Bering Strait. Why not use that same power to upend the entire corrupt Middle East edifice and bring liberty, democracy, and the rule of law to the Arab world?

The hawks' grand plan differs depending on whom you speak to, but the basic outline runs like this: The United States establishes a reasonably democratic, pro-Western government in Iraq—assume it falls somewhere between Turkey and Jordan on the spectrum of democracy and the rule of law. Not perfect, representative democracy, certainly, but a system infinitely preferable to Saddam's. The example of a democratic Iraq will radically change the political dynamics of the Middle East. When Palestinians see average Iraqis beginning to enjoy real freedom and economic opportunity, they'll want the same themselves. With that happy prospect on one hand and implacable United States will on the other, they'll demand that the Palestinian Authority reform politically and negotiate with Israel. That in turn will lead to a real peace deal between the Israelis and Palestinians. A democratic Iraq will also hasten the fall of the fundamentalist Shi'a mullahs in Iran, whose citizens are gradually adopting anti-fanatic, pro-Western sympathies. A democratized Iran would create a string of democratic, pro-Western governments (Turkey, Iraq, and Iran) stretching across the historical heartland of Islam. Without a hostile Iraq towering over it, Jordan's pro-Western Hashemite monarchy would likely come into full bloom. Syria would be no more than a pale reminder of the bad old days. (If they made trouble, a U.S. invasion would take care of them, too.) And to the tiny Gulf emirates making hesitant steps toward democratization, the corrupt regimes of Saudi Arabia and Egypt would no longer look like examples of stability and strength in a benighted region, but holdouts against the democratic tide. Once the dust settles, we could decide whether to ignore them as harmless throwbacks to the bad old days or deal with them, too. We'd be in a much stronger position to do so since we'd no longer require their friendship to help us manage ugly regimes in Iraq, Iran, and Syria.

The audacious nature of the neocons' plan makes it

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easy to criticize but strangely difficult to dismiss outright. Like a character in a bad made-for-TV thriller from the 1970s, you can hear yourself saying, "That plan's just crazy enough to work."

But like a TV plot, the hawks' vision rests on a willing suspension of disbelief, in particular, on the premise that every close call will break in our favor: The guard will fall asleep next to the cell so our heroes can pluck the keys from his belt. The hail of enemy bullets will plink-plink-plink over our heroes' heads. And the getaway car in the driveway will have the keys waiting in the ignition. Sure, the hawks' vision could come to pass. But there are at least half a dozen equally plausible alternative scenarios that would be disastrous for us.

To begin with, this whole endeavor is supposed to be about reducing the long-term threat of terrorism, particularly terrorism that employs weapons of mass destruction. But, to date, every time a Western or non-Muslim country has put troops into Arab lands to stamp out violence and terror, it has awakened entire new terrorist organizations and a generation of recruits. Placing U.S. troops in Riyadh after the Gulf War (to protect Saudi Arabia and its oilfields from Saddam) gave Osama bin Laden a cause around which he built al Qaeda. Israel took the West Bank in a war of self-defense, but once there its occupation helped give rise to Hamas. Israel's incursion into southern Lebanon (justified at the time, but transformed into a permanent occupation) led to the rise of Hezbollah. Why do we imagine that our invasion and occupation of Iraq, or whatever countries come next, will turn out any differently?

The Bush administration also insists that our right to act preemptively and unilaterally, with or without the international community's formal approval, rests on the need to protect American lives. But with the exception of al Qaeda, most terrorist organizations in the world, and certainly in the Middle East, do not target Americans. Hamas certainly doesn't. Hezbollah, the most fearsome of terrorist organizations beside al Qaeda, has killed American troops in the Middle East, but not for some years, and it has never targeted American civilians on American soil. Yet like Hamas, Hezbollah has an extensive fundraising cell operation in the States (as do many terrorist organizations, including the Irish Republican Army). If we target them in the Middle East, can't we reasonably assume they will respond by activating these cells and taking the war worldwide?

Next, consider the hawks' plans for those Middle East states that are authoritarian yet "friendly" to the United States—specifically Egypt and Saudi Arabia. No question these are problem countries. Their governments buy our weapons and accept our foreign aid yet allow vicious anti-Semitism to spew from the state run airwaves and tolerate clerics who preach jihad against the West. But is it really in our interests to work for their overthrow? Many hawks clearly think so. I asked Richard Perle last year about the dangers that might flow from the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. "Mubarak is no great shakes," he quipped. "Surely we can do better than Mubarak." When I asked Perle's friend and fellow Reagan-era neocon Ken Adelman to calculate the costs of having the toppling of Saddam lead to the overthrow of the House of Saud, he shot back: "All the better if you ask me."

The audacious nature of the neocons' plan makes it easy to criticize but strangely difficult to dismiss outright. Like a character in a bad made-for-TV thriller from the 1970s, you can hear yourself saying, "That plan's just crazy enough to work."

This cavalier call for regime change, however, runs into a rather obvious problem. When the communist regimes of Eastern and Central Europe fell after 1989, the people of those nations felt grateful to the United States because we helped liberate them from their Russian colonial masters. They went on to create pro-Western democracies. The same is unlikely to happen, however, if we help "liberate" Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The tyrannies in these countries are home grown, and the U.S. government has supported them, rightly or wrongly, for decades, even as we've ignored (in the eyes of Arabs) the plight of the Palestinians. Consequently, the citizens of these countries generally hate the United States, and show strong sympathy for Islamic radicals. If free elections were held in Saudi Arabia today, Osama bin Laden would probably win more votes than Crown Prince Abdullah. Topple the pro-Western autocracies in these countries, in other words, and you won't get pro-Western democracies but anti-Western tyrannies.

To this dilemma, the hawks offer two responses. One is that eventually the citizens of Egypt and Saudi Arabia will grow disenchanted with their anti-Western Islamic governments, just as the people of Iran have, and become our friends. To which the correct response is,

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well, sure, that's a nice theory, but do we really want to make the situation for ourselves hugely worse now on the strength of a theoretical future benefit?

The hawks' other response is that if the effort to push these countries toward democracy goes south, we can always use our military might to secure our interests. "We need to be more assertive," argues Max Boot, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, "and stop letting all these two-bit dictators and rogue regimes push us around and stop being a patsy for our so-called allies, especially in Saudi Arabia." Hopefully, in Boot's view, laying down the law will be enough. But he envisions a worst-case scenario that would involve the United States "occupying the Saudi's oil fields and administering them as a trust for the people of the region."

What Boot is calling for, in other words, is the creation of a de facto American empire in the Middle East. In fact, there's a subset of neocons who believe that given our unparalleled power, empire is our destiny and we might as well embrace it. The problem with this line of thinking is, of course, that it ignores the lengthy and troubling history of imperial ambitions, particularly in the Middle East. The French and the English didn't leave voluntarily; they were driven out. And they left behind a legacy of ignorance, exploitation, and corruption that's largely responsible for the region's current dysfunctional politics.

Christina Larson

George W. Bush, colonialist

Another potential snafu for the hawks is Iran, arguably the most dangerous state in the Middle East. The good news is that the fundamentalist Shi'a mullahs who have been running the government, exporting terrorism, and trying to enrich their uranium, are increasingly unpopular. Most experts believe that the mullahs' days are numbered, and that true democracy will come to Iran. That day will arrive sooner, the hawks argue, with a democratic Iraq on Iran's border. But the opposite could happen. If the mullahs are smart, they'll cooperate just enough with the Americans not to provoke an attack, but put themselves forth to their own people as defenders of Iranian independence and Iran's brother Shi'a in southern Iraq who are living under the American jackboot. Such a strategy might keep the fundamentalists in power for years longer than they otherwise might have been.

Then there is the mother of all problems, Iraq. The hawks' whole plan rests on the assumption that we can turn it into a self-governing democracy—that the very presence of that example will transform politics in the Middle East. But what if we can't really create a democratic, self-governing Iraq, at least not very quickly? What if the experience we had after World War II in Germany and Japan, two ethnically homogeneous nations, doesn't quite work in an ethnically divided Iraq where one group, the Sunni Arabs, has spent decades repressing and slaughtering the others? As one former Army officer with long experience with the Iraq file explains it, the "physical analogy to Saddam Hussein's regime is a steel beam in compression." Give it one good hit, and you'll get a violent explosion. One hundred thousand U.S. troops may be able to keep a lid on all the pent-up hatred. But we may soon find that it's unwise to hand off power to the fractious Iraqis. To invoke the ugly but apt metaphor which Jefferson used to describe the American dilemma of slavery, we will have the wolf by the ears. You want to let go. But you dare not.

And what if we do muster the courage to allow elections, but the Iraqis choose a government we can't live with—as the Japanese did in their first post-war election, when the United States purged the man slated to become prime minister? But if we do that in Iraq, how will it look on Al Jazeera? Ultimately, the longer we stay as occupiers, the more Iraq becomes not an example for other Arabs to emulate, but one that helps Islamic fundamentalists make their case that America is just an old-fashioned imperium bent on conquering Arab lands. And that will make worse all the problems set forth above.

None of these problems are inevitable, of course. Luck, fortitude, deft management, and help from allies could bring about very different results. But we can probably only rely on the first three because we are starting this enterprise over the expressed objections of almost every other country in the world. And that's yet another reason why overthrowing the Middle East won't be the same as overthrowing communism. We did the latter, after all, within a tight formal alliance, NATO. Reagan's most effective military move against Moscow, for instance, placing Pershing II missiles in Western Europe, could never have happened, given widespread

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public protests, except that NATO itself voted to let the weapons in. In the Middle East, however, we're largely alone. If things go badly, what allies we might have left are liable to say to us: You broke it, you fix it.

Whacking the Hornet's Nest

If the Bush administration has thought through these various negative scenarios—and we must presume, or at least pray, that it has—it certainly has not shared them with the American people. More to the point, the president has not even leveled with the public that such a clean-sweep approach to the Middle East is, in fact, their plan. This breaks new ground in the history of pre-war presidential deception. Franklin Roosevelt said he was trying to keep the United States out of World War II even as he—in some key ways—courted a confrontation with the Axis powers that he saw as both inevitable and necessary. History has judged him well for this. Far more brazenly, Lyndon Johnson's administration greatly exaggerated the Gulf of Tonkin incident to gin up support for full-throttle engagement in Vietnam. The war proved to be Johnson's undoing. When President Clinton used American troops to quell the fighting in Bosnia he said publicly that our troops would be there no longer than a year, even though it was widely understood that they would be there far longer. But in the case of these deceptions, the public was at least told what the goals of the wars were and whom and where we would be fighting.

Today, however, the great majority of the American people have no concept of what kind of conflict the president is leading them into. The White House has presented this as a war to depose Saddam Hussein in order to keep him from acquiring weapons of mass destruction—a goal that the majority of Americans support. But the White House really has in mind an enterprise of a scale, cost, and scope that would be almost impossible to sell to the American public. The White House knows that. So it hasn't even tried. Instead, it's focused on getting us into Iraq with the hope of setting off a sequence of events that will draw us inexorably towards the agenda they have in mind.

The brazenness of this approach would be hard to believe if it weren't entirely in line with how the administration has pursued so many of its other policy goals. Its preferred method has been to use deceit to create *faits accomplis*, facts on the ground that then make the administration's broader agenda almost impossible not to pursue. During and after the 2000 campaign, the president called for major education and prescription drug programs plus a huge tax cut, saying America could easily afford them all because of large budget surpluses. Critics said it wasn't true, and the growing budget deficits have proven them right. But the administration now uses the existence of big budget deficits as a way to put the squeeze on social programs—part of its plan all along. Strip away the presidential seal and the fancy titles, and it's just a straight-up con.

The same strategy seemed to guide the administration's passive-aggressive attitude towards our allies. It spent the months after September 11 signaling its distaste for international agreements and entangling alliances. The president then demanded last September that the same countries he had snubbed support his agenda in Iraq. And last month, when most of those countries refused, hawks spun that refusal as evidence that they were right all along. Recently, a key neoconservative commentator with close ties to the administration told me that the question since the end of the Cold War has been which global force would create the conditions for global peace and security: the United States, NATO, or the United Nations. With NATO now wrecked, he told me, the choice is between the Unites States and the United Nations. Whether NATO is actually wrecked remains to be seen. But the strategy is clear: push the alliance to the breaking point, and when it snaps, cite it as proof that the alliance was good for nothing anyway. It's the definition of chutzpah, like the kid who kills his parents and begs the judge for sympathy because he's an orphan.

Another president may be able to rebuild NATO or get the budget back in balance. But once America begins the process of remaking the Middle East in the way the hawks have in mind, it will be extremely difficult for any president to pull back. Vietnam analogies have long been overused, and used inappropriately, but this may be one case where the comparison is apt.

Ending Saddam Hussein's regime and replacing it with something stable and democratic was always going to be a difficult task, even with the most able leadership and the broadest coalition. But doing it as the Bush administration now intends is something like going outside and giving a few good whacks to a hornets' nest because you want to get them out in the open and have it out with them once and for all. Ridding the world of Islamic terrorism by rooting out its ultimate sources—Muslim fundamentalism and the Arab world's endemic despotism, corruption, and poverty—might work. But the costs will be immense. Whether the danger is sufficient and the costs worth incurring would make for an interesting public debate. The problem is that once it's just us and the hornets, we really won't have any choice. ●

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Castro's Casting Couch

In Hollywood's love affair with Fidel, who's using whom?

BY DAMIEN CAVE

WHEN I ARRIVED LAST NOVEMBER, Cuba felt like a private paradise. Thanks to a steep decline in tourism, empty white-sand beaches were easy to find. My favorite Havana restaurant—a seven-table outdoor café with cheap beer and the best *picadillo* in town—contained only Cubans. I could even walk the Malecon, a wide seaside avenue that rings Havana, without hearing anything but Spanish, salsa music, and the heavy growl of old American cars. Everything slick, new, consumer-friendly, and advertised—everything from home, in short—seemed to be not just miles but also decades away. I thought I'd finally found the perfect escape, a true island apart.

Then someone asked me if I had arrived with Steven Spielberg. A few days later, during the Latin American Festival, a friend pointed to an old man shuffling across the marble tiles of Havana's Hotel Nacional and said, "That's Grandpa Munster." (It was, indeed, actor and Green Party gubernatorial candidate Al Lewis.) Later that week, I listened to Harry Belafonte rail against a lack of press freedom in the United States—but not Cuba—and then found myself in the odd position of fighting with Matt Dillon for a taxi. By the time Danny Glover and Julie Taymor crossed my path, I thought I'd seen it all, until I discovered that Oliver Stone had spent three days with Fidel Castro a few months before I arrived.

Stone, unlike most of the glitterati, came to Cuba to make a film. The resulting effort is a frustrating *caramelo* Castro portrait that should have been titled *From Cuba With Love* instead of *Comandante*. For me, the film simply confirmed what I'd already suspected—that Stone is still more audacious, or maybe more shameless, than anyone else in Hollywood. Who but the director of *JFK* would quote Castro saying that he never believed Kennedy was killed by a lone gunman? Who but the director of *Salvador*, a preachy indictment of U.S. policy in Central America, would take Castro at his word when he says "we have never practiced torture," a statement that Human Rights Watch contradicts pretty much annually?

You can see Stone's handiwork for yourself in May on HBO. But even before I subjected myself to his worshipful effort, at a private screening held recently at the cable channel's offices, I began to wonder about the relationship between Hollywood and Cuba's ultimate *jefe*. Stone may occupy the outer ring of idiocy, but as I later discovered, Spielberg, Jack Nicholson, Chevy Chase, Ted Turner, and several other big shots have all visited and publicly praised Castro in the past few years alone. Today, as George W. Bush makes the case for a new American empire in the Middle East, Hollywood is rushing to an island that the United States once ran as a *de facto* colony, and rallying around a man who threw "American imperialists" out of his country in 1959.

There's clearly a mix of personal and political motivations at play. Castro and American celebrities seem to be playing a powerful, fascinating game of

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seduction. The question is, who's the Don Juan and who's the dupe?

Fidel Fidelity

When Spielberg told reporters at a film conference in Havana that he would love to make a film in Cuba, it merely confirmed the fact that for many filmmakers, the island isn't just a rediscovered paradise, it's a modern Atlantis, a 1950s pastel poster set to the music of *Buena Vista Social Club*, an island of retro, re-issued dreams. Cuba is "beautiful, exotic, musical, sexy, and still not far from the past alluded to in *The Godfather Part II*," says David Thomson, author of *The Biographical Dictionary of Film*.

Everyone who visits Cuba regularly, of course, has a soft spot for the island, myself included. It's difficult for any Western tourist to see past the restored hotels and lush physical splendor to the decrepit homes and sputtering economy—and it's even harder for actors, directors, and other celebrities to do so. Like Matt Dillon, who I last saw speeding off to a popular nightclub, they're whisked from one hot spot to another by guides who always give the country a rave review. More often than not, the humiliating *no es facil* struggle that ordinary Cubans face is glimpsed only through taxicab windows, a shallow, quick blur of color and noise.

Then, too, there is the colossal persona of Fidel, a charismatic man whose harshest critics still call him brave and brilliant. American film culture, moreover—with its love of the underdog, its happy-ending romanticism, and its inclination to resolve moral ambiguity into categorical good and evil—is fertile territory for Castro canonization. For those willing to look past the harshness of everyday Cuban life, Castro is the ultimate visionary, a Robin Hood who understood long before anyone else that battling the United States "will be my true destiny," as he wrote in a 1958 letter to Celia Sanchez, his longtime lover and confidant. Castro, who's outlived nine U.S. presidential administrations, embodies more than just pragmatic perseverance. His life is an epic. Here's a man who courted death, humiliated John F. Kennedy at the Bay of Pigs, and is rumored to have slept with thousands of women. Simply put, says Robert Thompson, director of Syracuse University's Center for the Study of Popular Culture, "for character, this guy is hard to beat." He hasn't just lived the traditional Hollywood script—man faces conflict, overcomes difficulties, and wins big. He's done it on the world stage, before an audience of billions. No wonder Spielberg described his night with Castro as "the most important eight hours of my life"; no wonder Stone seems wholly unconcerned with Cuba's lack of free speech. The romanticized version of Fidel's story—which ignores the fact that he grew up rich, among other things—is difficult to resist. For those living in a town that lionizes larger-than-life figures, Castro isn't just a star. He's an archetype.

Miami Vice

It's not just romanticism, however, that pushes stars toward Fidel's corner. It's also frustration with U.S. foreign policy—much of it justified. In the 200 years that the United States and Cuba have had a relationship, Cuba hasn't exactly been showered with love and respect. President William McKinley hijacked Cuba's fight for independence in 1898 and unjustly made the island a protectorate in name, a colony in practice. The resulting political culture was rotten; gangsterism oozed from every institutional pore. But year after year, American politicians turned a blind eye to the island's problems. Fidel's sins aside, filmmakers were right to portray the period as poisonous. Scholars of Cuba generally agree that some kind of revolution was inevitable, which is exactly the feeling you'll get from Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather Part II* and Sydney Pollack's failed Robert Redford romance, *Havana*—both of which end with a defeated Fulgencio Batista fleeing Havana for Miami.

It's true that, during and after the Cold War, Hollywood has appeared to have little interest in portraying life under Castro's reign. Conservatives argue that this proves that Hollywood is trying to avoid making Fidel look bad. But the major U.S. studios almost never make movies that don't have Americans in them, and the simple truth is that there haven't been many Americans in Cuba during the last 50 years.

Though he often promises never to concede to the capitalists, and prefers the phrase "socialism or death," Hollywood represents an exception. It's one of only two American products (sport is the other) that Cubans and Castro are now somewhat free to enjoy.

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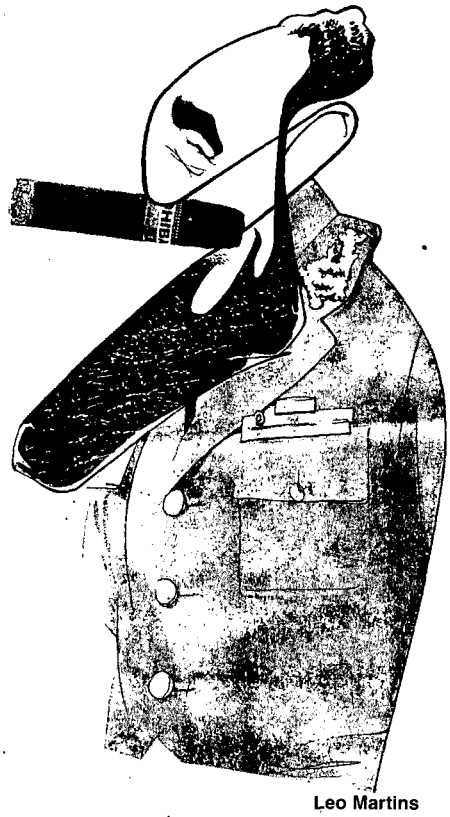
(Unless you count the troops at Guantanamo.) Watch the two recent major movies that touched upon U.S.-Cuba relations during that period—*Thirteen Days* and Stone's *JFK*—and you'll see that neither of them portrays the dictator in a flattering light. If these movies, like *The Godfather* and *Havana*, concern themselves less with Castro than with the way Americans relate to Cuba, perhaps it's only because Hollywood prefers to address what's familiar.



Leo Martins

Even today, when American directors and actors go to Cuba, it's not really about Cuba—it's about America's policy toward Cuba. "I personally feel that this embargo should be lifted," Spielberg said at a conference this November. "I do not see any reason for accepting old grudges being played out in the 21st century." The director went on to wonder why the United States trades with China, but not Cuba—a question the mainstream foreign policy elite has been asking for years. The embargo hasn't undermined Castro for four decades. Meanwhile, we're engaging with China under the theory that trade and tourism undermine repressive regimes. That may or may not be true, but if the logic is good enough for China, surely it's good enough for Cuba. The problem, of course, is Florida's cadre of politically powerful Cuban emigrés, whom both parties are wary of offending, and who thus exert disproportionate influence in setting policy (and who, as the Elian controversy showed, aren't exactly poster children for the rule of law).

"Movie Star Dictator"

But Castro doesn't just offer contact with an historical legend, nor is he simply a convenient surrogate for those who long to criticize U.S. policy. He also attracts adulation because he has the ability to make ego-conscious stars feel close to him. "All we hear about is his long-winded speeches. But one-on-one, he's as good a listener as he is a talker," says Ann Louise Bardach, who interviewed Castro in the mid-'90s and was the first to label him a "movie star dictator." "It's the same with Warren Beatty; they look at you like you're the only person in the world."

Castro, unlike many of his guests, also understands the value of preparation. "One of the things that Fidel is very good at is that he will be very well briefed on the person brought into his presence," says Dennis Hays, head of the Cuban American National Foundation's Washington office. "He'll know their interests; he'll stroke these guys up one way and down another." In Stone's case, Castro seems to have read up on the one experience that he and the director shared: combat. Like a brilliant lawyer, he then put that knowledge to use when he needed it most. After Stone asked the film's toughest question, about Cuban soldiers' role in the torture of American soldiers in Vietnam, Castro used it to create a diversion. "You won medals, right," he said to Stone. "It takes the same type of courage to do what you're doing now." Head down but nodding, Stone simply listened—as if he'd been convinced that interviewing Castro was as dangerous as dodging Viet Cong bullets. And then the camera cut away. Score one for Castro.

The charm doesn't fade over time, either. Several years after meeting Ted Turner, for example, Castro sat for an interview with CNN's Bernard Shaw and was asked which major league baseball team he rooted for. His reply was simple but telling: "Perhaps because of my friendship with Ted Turner," he said, "the Atlanta Braves." Conservatives like Michael Medved, author of *Hollywood vs. America*, argue that this kind of constant attention helps celebrities assuage their liberal guilt. Because Castro fought for the poor, Medved argues, rich entertainers who support him feel better about their own extravagant wealth. He essentially soothes their self-loathing.

This doesn't seem quite right. People like Steven Spielberg, if they even feel liberal guilt in the first place, have better ways to cure themselves—like by giving away large sums of money, as Spielberg has done

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in creating the Shoah Foundation. Medved is right, however, to focus on stars' hunger for attention and personal connection. One of the most interesting aspects of Castro's relationship to celebrity is the way he and stars find common bonds. Powerful men in particular (and not just from Hollywood) can't stop reveling in how they relate to a man whom they see as historically important. Whether it's Stone saying "he reminds me of my father" in *Comandante* or Ted Turner, who at one point described Castro as "a dictator just like me," it's clear that alpha males have an urge to remake Fidel in their own image.

This is partly Castro's brilliance: "He hits all the right notes," says Bardach, author of *Cuba Confidential: Love and Vengeance in Miami and Havana*. "He's the right man for the machista culture. He doesn't complain in public, he doesn't talk about women." Showbiz, however, is an industry that thrives on flattery and power. Stars are thus more vulnerable than most to Castro's wiles—Stone, most notably. He doesn't just take Castro at his word when he says "we have never practiced torture." He also jokes with Castro about Viagra, lets him off the hook on the issue of free elections, never even mentions Cuba's lack of free speech or assembly, and has nothing to say when Castro dismisses Huber Matos as "a coward." Wasn't Matos the man who almost single-handedly saved the Cuban revolution by securing a planeload of arms from Costa Rica in the spring of 1958? Didn't Castro bestow upon him the rarely used title of "comandante" for his sacrifices, only to imprison him for resigning from the regime in 1960?

Stone didn't get around to asking such questions. He instead focused on Castro's exercise regimen (a lot of office pacing) and his favorite starlet (Brigitte Bardot). Not that he has any shame or regrets about how Castro is portrayed. "I thought he was warm and bright," Stone reportedly told an audience of reporters at *Comandante*'s Jan. 18 Sundance premiere. "He's a very driven man, a very moral man."

Fidel Film Lore

The fact is, stars become too distracted—by the romance of Cuba, the urge to dissent, or their own egos—to truly understand Cuba's heart and soul. Celebrities essentially become children when it comes to Cuba, just, as one could argue, Jane Fonda did on her 1972 visit to Vietnam. (Today Barbra Streisand, who misspelled Saddam Hussein's name in a letter of anti-war protest she sent to Congress, seems to be the favorite example.)

And yet, even though Hollywood's love affair with Fidel is fueled, in many cases, by egotism and moral obtuseness, the end result looks a lot like progress. Cubans' hunger for outside information is nearly insatiable. American films that make it to Cuba draw large crowds. The underground market for VCRs and videotapes has been thriving for years and nearly every film at this year's Latin American Film Festival sold out. At one point, police even had to repel hundreds of shouting fans who were trying to jam into a theater showing *Balseros*, a documentary about Cuban refugees who floated to the United States in home-made rafts during the 1994 immigration crisis.

More outlets are needed for this kind of passion. Cuba is more open than it was 20 years ago because Castro now has to depend on European and Canadian investors rather than Soviet aid. The most efficient way to capitalize on this shift—and undermine Castro's regime—would be to flood his country with venture capital, tourists, and American consumer goods. The next best thing would be to have more American movies, with their expensive cars and freedom, showing up on Cuban screens.

Enter Hollywood. Castro clearly understands the danger that film poses to his regime. He's worked hard to master television and it's no coincidence that most of the movies reaching Cuba—like *The Majestic*, which focused in part on Hollywood's anti-communist blacklist—show America at its worst. Still, the Comandante can't seem to help falling for star appearances. Though he often promises never to concede to the capitalists, and prefers the phrase "socialism or death," Hollywood represents an exception. It's one of only two American products (sport is the other) that Cubans and Castro are now somewhat free to enjoy.

Celebrity visits in particular put Castro on his best behavior. He doesn't just tolerate questions from stars that he would never accept from his own people or foreign journalists. He also, in his attempt to show Cuba at its best, often lets down his country's guard. When Steven Spielberg arrived, for example, Castro put on a retrospective of the director's work. Lines snaked around the block outside central Havana's 1,000-seat Payret Theater for nearly every movie. *A.I.* and *E.T.* became hotly debated items in the *chisme* gossip circuit. But one film in particular gained attention: *Minority Report*, a tale of what can go wrong when a Big Brother police state gains too much power. The film probably wouldn't have been shown if not for Spielberg's visit, and Cubans clearly understood its message: The enemy is within. As one Cuban told me, "it got me right here, *en el corazón*." ●

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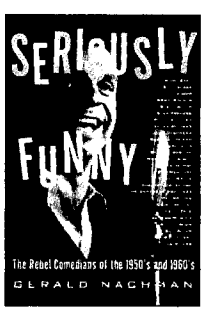
Rebels With Applause

How stand-up political comedy stopped being subversive.

BY MATTHEW COOPER

NO ONE, I THINK, PLANS TO BECOME A stand-up comedian the way you choose to become a doctor or a lawyer. Even acting is, to some degree, a chosen profession. But stand-up comedy is the kind of thing that one drifts into. My own foray into comedy has been quite accidental. As a kid, I'd crack up classmates with impersonations of my teachers, like Nino DePinto, my eighth-grade history teacher back in New Jersey who'd turn red talking about Garibaldi. "*Il Risorgimento*! Remember it."

A few years ago, I gave a toast at the birthday party of a friend, Walter Shapiro, the *USA Today* columnist and fellow alumnus of this magazine. Walter had begun to do stand-up at various New York comedy clubs. After my toast, he asked if I wanted to join him sometime. I did, and have been performing with him on stage every couple of months in New York and every now and then in Washington. What's it like to do stand-up? Of course, it's about as close as you can get to that dream you have of walking into class naked. If you're a singer, maybe a band can cover up a missed note. Short of doing a solo interpretive dance or a strip-club act, what else really could leave you more exposed? That's why I'm always a bit nauseous when I go on and have that I-just-survived-a-car-wreck feeling when I walk off. Sure, you come armed with some jokes you're confident will work. I did a Washington fundraiser gig not long ago, and I knew some lines would probably come off: "Howard Dean is kind of an interesting guy. For gay rights and against gun control—which means he's locked up the gay hunter vote." (For the sake of political correctness I forgo imitating two gay hunters: "Bruce, great shot! What a great throw rug he'll make.") They like the joke about John Kerry calling himself a rebel: "Kerry's idea of rebellion is having red wine with fish." But then you gotta read the crowd. Tom Daschle was in the audience, so I point out that he's there and then ask the audience to give him a round of applause. This softens the blow of the joke to come: "Been kind of a tough year, huh? You get to keep your health insurance?" It goes over pretty well. Then there's the question of what the audience will get. I talk about Bush's State of the Union idea from the night before, Project Bioshield, a plan to protect the country from biological weapons. "Project Bioshield," I say. "Sounds like a feminine hygiene product." I add, imitating Bush: "We're workin' hard to keep us safe. And fresh. And feminine."



SERIOUSLY FUNNY:
The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s
by Gerald Nachman
Pantheon, $29.95

The kind of political comedy I do is not exactly rare. In fact, it is everywhere. From Jay Leno to Dennis Miller, Al Franken to Bill Maher to Don Imus, our culture is awash in political comedy. Many Americans, it's often remarked, who don't read the papers get their news from the likes of Jon Stewart and David Letterman. Comedy needn't have a political purpose. It can just be funny. But at its best, political humor can be subversive, pushing the world in at least a different direction. Rush Limbaugh, a former deejay, who is as much a humorist as polemicist, had this effect 10 years ago, though probably not any more. But, in general, because political comedy is so pervasive, it may

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have lost much of its ability to be persuasive.

With political comedy now 24/7, it's startling to be reminded that the art form, as we know it, didn't exist until about 40 years ago. The early days of stand-up political comedy is the subject of Gerald Nachman's book, *Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s*.

A longtime newspaper critic, Nachman has put together a couple of dozen mini-biographies of what he calls the "rebel comedians" of the 1950s and 1960s, famous angry men like Lenny Bruce, Mort Sahl, and Dick Gregory; intellectual wits with *New Yorker* sensibilities like Tom Lehrer and Nichols and May; and a slew of TV favorites like Bob Newhart, Bill Cosby, and Steve Allen who it's hard to think of as rebels at first glance.

For Nachman, as for many historians, the '50s weren't an era of Eisenhoweresque consensus. He focuses on the roiling waters beneath the surface of American life—more *Rebel Without a Cause* than "Ozzie and Harriet." "Nearly every major comedian who broke through in the 1950s and 1960s was a cultural harbinger: Sahl, of a new political cynicism; Lenny Bruce, of the sexual, pharmaceutical, and linguistic revolution (and the anything-goes nature of comedy itself); Dick Gregory, of racial unrest; Bill Cosby and Godfrey Cambridge, of racial harmony; Phyllis Diller, of housewifely complaint; Mike Nichols, Elaine May, and Woody Allen, of self-analytical angst and a rearrangement of male-female relations; Stan Freeberg and Bob Newhart, of the encroaching, pervasive manipulation by the advertising and public relations culture; Mel Brooks, of the Yiddish-ization of American comedy ..."

Before the '50s rebels, Catskills culture dominated American comedy. It was a time, Nachman writes, "in which comedians, clad like bandleaders in spats and tuxes, sporting cap-and-bells names like Joey, Jackie, or Jerry, announced themselves by their brash, anything-for-a-laugh, charred-earth policy and by-the-jokebook gags. Catskill refugees, they were *tummlers* and *shpritzers* incubated in resorts, supper clubs, casinos." The old comedians did mother-in-law jokes; the new ones did JFK. The Catskillians wore suits; the new guys dressed casual. And the new ones often worked "blue," cursing. It's hard to imagine how staid sensibilities were at the time. Allan Sherman, who recorded G-rated comedy albums and song parodies—he's probably best known for "Hello Mudder, Hello Fadder"—was denounced by composer Richard Rodgers as "a destroyer." The Smothers Brothers' famed '60s TV show got canceled because of its long string of anti-war jokes but the proximate cause of their dismissal came when network censors freaked out over David Steinberg's bit about WASPs tossing Jonah to the whale.

What's interesting, after reading Nachman's book, is reflecting on how much political comedy today is essentially content-free. Leno or Jon Stewart may devote 15 minutes a night to a stand-up that's almost all politics and it's very funny, but it's essentially nihilist: "Those guys, what a bunch of idiots," is the subtext. There's nothing wrong with that, of course. Comedy shouldn't have to have a message. Art isn't propaganda, and most of the political humorists whom we admire from the past, Mark Twain or Will Rogers, for example, were in a similar vein—essentially mocking everything, albeit with a gentler mien. Still, what's notable is that we have more political humor and less rebellion. Dennis Miller's "rants" are curse-laden and hysterical, but there's nothing essentially dangerous or subversive about them.

The same can't be said for Mort Sahl or Lenny Bruce, who were considered outsized rebels at the time. Sahl faded into obscurity; he started, weirdly, to devote huge portions of his act to debunking the Warren Commission and came to be seen as a kind of conspiracy nut. Bruce, as anyone who's seen the Dustin Hoffman film *Lenny* knows, descended into an abyss of drugs, alcohol, and self-indulgence. His comic act became boring recitations of his troubles with police who would bust up his act as "obscene."

Still, in their day, they were rebels. Sahl took on political topics. Of Bobby Kennedy's wiretaps, he said: "Little brother is watching." He had the Borscht belt sexism and made it modern-day: "There are no women in the beat generation," he said, "just girls who have broken with their parents for the evening." Asked by Eddie Fisher on TV to say something funny, Sahl replied: "John Foster Dulles." His trademark sweater and loafers were considered shocking, and NBC forced him to wear a suit and tie on the "Colgate Comedy Hour" before later relenting. And there was an elitism about his act: Peppering his shtick with pop culture from *Motor Trend* to *Time*, he'd get laughs by uttering a trendy phrase—communal guilt, group needs, or standard deviation—even if the audience wasn't quite sure what it meant.

Bruce was edgier. The police would bust up shows for phrases like "cocksucker." His 1964 New York trial became a *cause célebre*, with the likes of Irving Howe, Lionel Trilling, and Reinhold Niebuhr signing petitions for him. Still, he was about more than shock. He helped make Jews seem cool and hip before Woody Allen. One of his signature shticks was "Jewish and Goyish": "Dig: I'm Jewish. Count Basie's Jewish. Ray Charles is Jewish. Eddie Cantor's Goyish. B'nai B'rith is Goyish; Hadassah, Jewish. If you live in New York or any other big city, you are Jewish. It doesn't matter even if you're Catholic. If you live in Butte, Montana, you're Goyish even if you're Jew-

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ish. Kool-Aid is Goyish. Chocolate is Jewish, and fudge is Goyish. Fruit salad is Jewish. Lime Jell-O is Goyish. Drake's Cakes are Goyish. Pumpernickel is Jewish. Balls are Goyish, titties are Jewish. Baton-twirling is very Goyish. All Negroes are Jewish." As Nachman notes: "He saw humor in everything—in racism; in asking men in the audience if they'd rather sleep with Lena Horne or Kate Smith; in the Holocaust (holding up a fake newspaper with the headline "Six Million Jews Found in Argentina"); in marital relations (husband begging his wife to "touch it just once").

What Nachman gets is that the seemingly safe comedians could be just as dangerous. The idea that Bob Newhart was as much a rebel as Lenny Bruce seems odd at first. But Newhart—the original Dilbert as Nachman puts it—offered a more comprehensive critique of society. Before his 1970s and 1980s TV shows, Newhart's comedy albums were huge. His "Button-Down Mind of Bob Newhart" hit number one for a time. His shticks like Abe Lincoln's PR agent trying to get him to change the Gettysburg address are gentle but knife-edged stabs at a PR culture that waters everything down. In one, he captures everyman's helplessness when he plays Superman calling the dry cleaner trying to get his cape back: "Yes, the leotards are kind of an off blue." Who's to say which is edgier, that or Bruce's self-conscious rebelliousness?

The same was true of black comedians. When Dick Gregory was out doing edgy racial humor—before he became a long-in-the-tooth activist, a mainstay at save-the-Ukrainian-sea-turtle political rallies—he was funny: "In my home town, they make us take a test to vote—nuclear physics in Russian." But was it really any edgier than Godfrey Cambridge, the safe Negro from TV who did a great act about liking watermelon but being too embarrassed to buy one? "That big squash over there. Wrap it up. And put handles on it." Bill Cosby was pushed by his agents and handlers to do racial jokes but rarely did. "I'd do guilt material sometimes," he said years later. He and Cambridge caught hell for not being black enough in their acts. (He'd do the racially neutral Fat Albert riffs about his childhood and timely jokes about the fast-growing sport of karate but not the explicitly racial.) But Cosby's color-blindness was, arguably, more revolutionary than Gregory's doting on race—a point made time and again when Cosby, in the 1980s, became NBC's biggest moneymaker. In time, Cosby came to be seen as having more racial edge. He gave money to black colleges and seemed less "I Spy." He worked a little more blue. But he was still essentially the black man all of America loved.

Nachman could have done more to weave the stories together, to offer more analysis and less biography. But this is a smart book and well-timed. Comedy's become an industry in American life, another corporate product. Nachman reminds us that comedy at its core is rebellious and mischievous, but that the most subversive comics aren't always the loudest. ●

The Washington Monthly's Monthly Journalism Award

Adam Clymer

"Government Openness at Issue as Bush Holds On to Records"
The New York Times, January 3, 2003

The Bush administration's more egregious efforts to shield government records and proceedings in secrecy—most notably, Vice President Cheney's energy task force records—have received ample attention from journalists. Clymer delves into some of the administration's less publicized efforts to limit public disclosures, such as its attempts to undercut the Freedom of Information Act and classify more documents. Clymer traces Bush's reluctance to release government records to the public back to his days as governor of Texas, and carefully lays out the case for why such secrecy raises grave problems, concluding that "secrecy does more harm than good."

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com. Nominations for stories run in February or March 2003 are due April 5, 2003.

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Falls of Justice

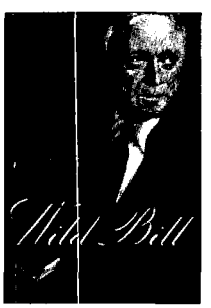
What happens when a biographer attacks his subject —and gets his facts wrong?

BY CHARLES LANE

TODAY, IT SEEMS, NO ONE MAY occupy high office without submitting his or her personal history to ongoing scrutiny of near-proctological thoroughness. (Just ask John Kerry.) And though such investigations are often justified in the name of the public's right to know, they can generate misinformation and myth as often as insight. In the 1990s, for instance, everyone "knew" that Bill and Hillary Clinton must have committed some sort of crime related to the Whitewater real estate deal—until, $70-million worth of independent counsel investigations later, it turned out they hadn't.

The Clintons were at least around to defend themselves. Many long-dead public figures have not been so lucky. They've had their personal lives exposed by gossipy, revisionist biographies that, while often providing illuminating and important information, also traffic in accusations that might or might not be true but become fixed in the public's mind. Everyone "knows," for instance, that former President Dwight D. Eisenhower had a long-term affair with his wartime assistant, Kay Summersby, thanks to accounts repeated in numerous books and articles. Yet there is almost no persuasive evidence that the affair ever took place, and plenty, including Summersby's own memoirs, that it didn't.

Of the overall generalization, Bruce Allen Murphy's biography of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas is a telling case in point. By any measure, Douglas's life is a worthy topic. He was only 40 when Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed him to the Supreme Court in 1939, after a corruption-busting stint as chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission and a brilliant rise on the faculty of Yale Law School. Douglas served 36 years on the Court, longer than anyone else in history, and is remembered today as one of the court's more uncompromising advocates of free speech and individual freedom. His opinion in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, the 1965 case guaranteeing married people the right to obtain contraceptives, established the doctrine of privacy rights—those derived from what Douglas called the "penumbras" and "emanations" of more precisely enumerated rights in the Bill of Rights—that paved the way for *Roe v. Wade*.



WILD BILL:
The Legend and Life of William O. Douglas
by Bruce Allen Murphy
Random House, $35.00

Murphy's biography certainly reminds readers of the justice's accomplishments—but his exploration of Douglas's dark side is attracting the most attention. Murphy, the Fred Morgan Kirby professor of civil rights at Lafayette College, describes a jurist who, for all his humanitarian rhetoric on the bench, treated his own friends, family, and colleagues shabbily. His political and ethical judgments were questionable, or worse. He scandalized the capital with his multiple marriages to attractive younger women. His outspokenness on issues beyond the court's purview, such as his early advocacy of recognizing Red China and his opposition to the war in Vietnam, earned criticism from both Republicans and Democrats.

In Murphy's account, the mainspring of Douglas's public career was his aching, but never fulfilled, ambition for the presidency. (Murphy pauses to offer only a sketchy

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explanation of the origins of Douglas's liberal ideology: Why he became a Democrat at all, given his Western frontier origins, remains somewhat unclear in this account.) Aced out by Harry Truman for the 1944 Democratic vice presidential nomination—a prize even then seen as a ticket to succeed the manifestly ailing FDR—Douglas came to see himself as trapped in the Supreme Court, a "peripheral" institution, as he once described it, to which he devoted less than his best efforts.

William O. Douglas (back row, second from the left) was a Supreme Court Justice for 36 years.

Other than political ambition, the other great driving force in Douglas's life, as Murphy tells it, was plain lust. His four marriages were just the tip of a priapic iceberg; according to Murphy, Douglas spent his summers in the Cascade Mountains not only hiking but also drinking heavily and pursuing local women. In 1951, he finally decided to dump his long-suffering first wife, Mildred, for the newly divorced ex-wife of a congressman. The resulting settlement, engineered for Mildred by Douglas's own New Deal chum Tommy "the Cork" Corcoran, fully exploited Douglas's personal and political weaknesses, guaranteeing Mildred a huge and escalating share of Douglas's future earnings. This "financial noose," Murphy argues, explains why Douglas churned out so many books while on the court. He needed money desperately.

Douglas's constant scramble for cash set the stage for his closest brush with impeachment, in 1970. The main charges against him involved his receipt of almost $100,000 between 1960 and 1969 from the Las Vegas-linked Alfred Parvin Foundation, of which he was the only paid official. But the impeachment effort, spearheaded by then-House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford, ultimately fizzled in the Democratic-controlled House.

Burial Rights

In his poor personal judgment, Douglas is reminiscent of another brilliant Democrat (or two) with a yen for the presidency and a weakness for women. But Murphy wants to do more than simply emphasize Douglas's already well-known character flaws. He also wants to unmask Douglas as a fraud—to show that key aspects of his persona, established in the public mind by Douglas's best-selling memoirs, were fabricated by the justice.

Douglas was, and still is, known as a man of the West, a poor kid who raised himself by his own bootstraps, rode the rails East, made himself a brilliant lawyer and then took on the powerful Wall Street interests. (These themes were sounded in his 1950 memoir, *Of Men and Mountains*, and repeated in Douglas's 1974 follow-up, *Go East, Young Man*.)

But according to Murphy, Douglas didn't overcome childhood polio, never served as an Army private in World War I, and didn't graduate second in his class at Columbia Law School. No, the justice's self-told story "was a lie—a secret until now," according to a press release from Murphy's publisher, Random House. It's a sensational claim, but can Murphy back it all up? After slogging through the book's 518 pages of text and its 195 pages of bibliography, footnotes, and index—and making a few phone calls to check some of his facts—I have my doubts.

Take Murphy's assertion that Douglas concocted his record of military service in World War I, and, in his later years, urged his family to use his phony status as a veteran to get him interred at Arlington National Cemetery after his death. This is a serious charge, as Murphy is aware. He draws a parallel between what he calls "the exaggeration of claims" by Douglas and the case of former U.S. ambassador M. Larry Lawrence, who was disinterred from Arlington in 1997 because his service record had been embellished.

Murphy writes that, at the time of Douglas's death in January 1980, burial at Arlington was reserved for those ex-servicemen who had received a Silver Star or higher medal, died on active duty, or served at least 20

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years. Almost everyone else needed a presidential waiver. But Douglas's military service, Murphy writes, consisted of 10 weeks as a private in the now-defunct Student Army Training Corps (SATC) at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Wash.—and that "did not qualify one for burial in Arlington as a military figure." The Whitman SATC, Murphy writes, marched around campus without guns, boots, or uniforms, and Douglas was sidelined by influenza for much of the time. When uniforms finally arrived after the November 1918 armistice, Douglas suited up for a photo, but his military record, Murphy writes, shows that he was never actually inducted into the Army or honorably discharged.

Nevertheless, according to Murphy, Douglas schemed to gain access to Arlington. On June 28, 1977, Douglas wrote his wife Cathy, telling her "I've remembered that I would qualify for burial in the Arlington National Cemetery because I was in World War I." This letter, Murphy writes, shows that Douglas "wanted to be buried as a soldier"—and, furthermore, Douglas "knew he had an ace to be played." The letter urged Cathy to consult Douglas's friend, Democratic Party consiglieri Clark Clifford, about the matter, since "he knows all the ropes." Murphy explains: "If the king of the Democrats could not get this done during the administration of Democratic president Jimmy Carter, Douglas knew, then he was unworthy of the title."

But Murphy's account is premised on a misstatement of the eligibility rules for burial at Arlington that would have applied to Douglas. Under Sec. 553.15 of Title 32 of the United States Code, which was in force in 1980, when Douglas died, burial at Arlington is permitted to any former associate justice of the Supreme Court whose "last period of active duty (other than for training) as a member of the Armed Forces terminated honorably." Thus, all Douglas's family would have had to show was that he had once served on active duty in any branch of the military for as little as one day, and that he had an honorable discharge, according to Tom Sherlock, chief historian at the cemetery.

And, indeed, Douglas's papers, now preserved at the Library of Congress, contain a copy of a Dec. 10, 1918 document headed "Honorable Discharge from The United States Army." It refers to him as "William O. Douglas, Serial No. 5200182, Private S.A.T.C., Whitman College, U.S. Army." The document notes that Douglas was "inducted" in the SATC on Oct. 4. In short, it proves that the authorities of the day considered Douglas's stint in the SATC to have been a form of active-duty Army service, however brief.

Murphy says otherwise because he does not understand the legal and military status of the SATC. It was not, as he says, the World War I version of ROTC, which was already in existence when World War I started. Rather, the SATC was a separate entity, devised by the War Department as a means to feed officer material into the rapidly mobilizing U.S. military. The SATC enrolled roughly 165,000 students at over 500 campuses nationwide between its first day of operation on October 1, 1918 and December 10, 1918, when it went out of business because of the armistice.

Murphy is surely right that the SATC was hardly a combat tour; it was mocked at many a campus with nicknames such as "Saturday Afternoon Tea Club" or "Safe At The College." Yet the U.S. government took the organization quite seriously. The Sept. 24, 1918 War Department regulations establishing the SATC, available from the U.S. Army Military History Institute at Carlisle, Pa., specify that "upon admission to the Students' Army Training Corps a registrant becomes a soldier in the Army of the United States. As such he is subject to military law and military discipline." The regulations also say that "Members of the Students' Army Training Corps will be placed upon active-duty status immediately."

To be sure, the SATC was, as its name suggests, a training corps, and the Arlington eligibility rules say that active duty must be "other than for training." But Arlington historian Sherlock said that this rule was "probably not" written with the obscure, long-defunct SATC in mind, and has generally been interpreted to refer to reservists whose only service consisted of weekend or summer duty. "Douglas had a federal service number which is honorable federal military service, and that's the only thing we'd look at," Sherlock said. "The key is not what we'd consider active duty service today, but that they did consider it active duty then."

In Contempt of Courtship

What, then, of Murphy's yarn about how Douglas urged his wife to have Clark Clifford put the fix in for him? Murphy offers no footnote to substantiate it; but the charge is illogical on its face, since Douglas knew he had honorable discharge papers from the Army and thus no need to pull strings. Even if Clifford were dispatched to negotiate some sort of special dispensation from the Carter White House for Douglas, this would have been no big deal. As Murphy himself acknowledges, Douglas "deserved to be buried in Arlington" because of his Supreme Court service—and presidential orders are one of the perfectly legal ways prominent non-veterans may be buried in the cemetery.

In any case, Douglas did not insist that his wife pursue burial for him at Arlington. The June 28, 1977 letter to Cathy Douglas actually concludes: "But don't push it

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or worry about it because Yakima [Washington] or Goose Prairie would be fine with me." This sentence, unmentioned in Murphy's account, shows Douglas was also contemplating burial elsewhere. Five months after the letter to Cathy, he wrote to a minister friend, Edward L.R. Elson, telling him that "I hope to be buried next to my father in the church cemetery in Yakima, Washington."

To all this, Murphy adds the insinuation that Douglas sought to avoid military service in World War I. He did not enlist in 1917, Murphy asserts, because at the time he was younger than 21 and would have needed parental permission, which Douglas "knew" his overprotective mother would have surely denied. After the draft age was lowered to 18 in August 1918, when Douglas was almost 20, he joined the SATC. Murphy quotes one of Douglas's fellow SATC members as implying that they entered the outfit to avoid true military service. "We had to be there," Hallam Mendenhall told Murphy. "If we hadn't, we'd have been drafted."

How does Murphy know Douglas "knew" that his mother would stop him from joining the military in 1917? Answer: Murphy cites no source. As for Douglas's alleged use of the SATC to dodge the draft, Murphy's suggestions are based on the one quotation from Mendenhall, which, if you look at it closely, does not refer specifically to Douglas's motivation. Douglas's side of the story, though, is already on the record. He wrote in *Go East, Young Man*: "I never could have evaded military service. For I had a passionate love not only for the mountains, but for our nation and its institutions as well." This comment may be self-serving, but a fair biographer would have at least mentioned it.

Douglas's version, as told in *Go East, Young Man*, is that he wanted to join the Marines when the war broke out in 1917, but concluded that he couldn't leave his mother to fend for herself financially. In 1918, when his sister took over their mother's care, he felt free to try to get in. He tried to sign up for naval aviation, but was rejected due to color-blindness—an explanation Murphy actually confirms in a footnote. Later, he managed to get inducted in the ROTC, and spent four weeks, June 3 to July 3, 1918, training at the ROTC camp in San Francisco—a fact Murphy also acknowledges, deep within his footnotes, and which is additionally confirmed by a certificate from the ROTC in Douglas's papers at the Library of Congress. He then returned to Whitman, where he joined SATC—though in his memoirs Douglas himself mistakenly refers to it as ROTC. He claims that he was still waiting for orders to ship out to an Army camp when the armistice came.

Far from aggrandizing his role in the armed forces, Douglas writes of how chagrined he was when his Whitman unit's commander asked the group to parade through Walla Walla to celebrate war's end. "I was sad and embarrassed," Douglas wrote. "We were far from being heroes. We had never been under fire. We had never even heard the distant cannon roar."

The bottom line: Douglas did not rush to the front, for what may have been understandable family reasons. But neither did he shirk entirely. Rather, he engaged in a form of service which, while modest, contained at least the potential for more substantial duty, at a time when he had no way of knowing how long the war might last. His burial at Arlington appears perfectly in order, even if the words on his headstone "Private, United States Army," are true mostly in a legalistic sense. Perhaps his memoirs boasted a bit too much about his summer "drill[ing] and march[ing] in the uniform of the United States Army," but whose war stories haven't improved with the telling?

Robed Rogue

Perhaps in spite of its flaws, then, Murphy's account of Douglas's life does help us distinguish personal peccadilloes that should matter to the public from those that shouldn't. Douglas's financial woes and his resultant pursuit of outside earnings, for example, are legitimate subjects—even if, after checking the accuracy of Murphy's military-related accusations, I'm skeptical of his details in this regard. A good reason for the public to be concerned by a high official's sexual conduct would be that it could lead him or her into conflicts of interest, real or apparent. Douglas's divorces and their consequences left him inappropriately dependent on the kindness of strangers (and friends). This web of relationships was legal then—and, according to the clubby, pre-Watergate Washington norms in which Douglas was steeped, probably ethically in-bounds, too. There is no evidence that it ever changed his behavior on the court.

Still, there is a reason we've abandoned pre-Watergate norms in favor of more formal ethical laws and regulations: to preserve public trust in the integrity of high officials, an especially important consideration for judicial officers. It is no credit to Douglas that he was not ahead of his time in this regard. Indeed, under the post-Watergate rules that govern the current justices, Douglas's relationship with the Parvin Foundation would have been illegal and, possibly, an impeachable offense. Moreover, prevailing norms at the court today would preclude the kind of outspoken political advocacy Douglas engaged in. When a person's private problems actually render him vulnerable to financial impropriety, real or apparent, they become of public interest. But minor résumé-inflators should be allowed to rest in peace. ●

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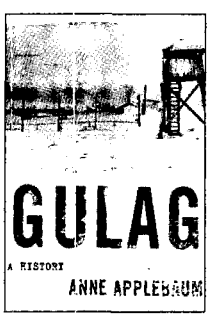
Red Scare

Fifty years after his death, Stalin's crimes are still morally shocking—and politically vexing.

BY BRUCE CLARK

IN HER NEW BOOK, ANNE APPLEBAUM tells an instructive story about Vice President Henry Wallace's first visit to the Soviet Far East in May 1944. Determined to think the best of America's wartime ally, Wallace took an instant liking to his Russian host, a senior secret policeman called Ivan Nikishov. The visitor was struck by the similarities between America and Russia as pioneering nations with vast natural resources, and he listened sympathetically as Nikishov told him how the town of Magadan, with 40,000 residents, had sprung up over the last 12 years. What Wallace hardly seems to have realized is that he was visiting a giant prison: Magadan was the "capital" of an area several times the size of France, where hundreds of thousands of people were sent to incarceration or exile. Many did not even arrive, because the ships that ferried prisoners to Magadan were notorious death traps. And work in the nearby Kolyma gold fields was so back-breaking that very few survived it for more than a couple of years. The town Wallace so admired had been built by penal labor; the singers and musicians who performed for him were captives (albeit under strict instructions not to reveal the fact); even the local embroidery which he politely praised was the work of prisoners.



GULAG:
A History
by Anne Applebaum
Doubleday, $35.00

What this story reminds us, of course, is that when a nation or coalition has focused all its attention on the defeat of a single enemy, it can easily become blinded to the faults, indeed the downright evil, of other forces in the world—especially if those other forces happen to be helping in the struggle against the main adversary. Winston Churchill, to his credit, was aware of this paradox: He once declared that if Hitler had invaded hell, Her Majesty's government would at least have sent a friendly diplomatic note to the Prince of Darkness. And most people would agree that when a nation is engaged in the heat of a life-and-death struggle with a clearly defined enemy, such as Nazi Germany, it is reasonable to accept help from almost any partner, however unsavory—as long as you do not deceive yourself, as Wallace appears to have done, about that partner's real nature. The wisdom of cultivating dubious allies—on the old "enemy of my enemy" principle—is much less self-evident when the war you are fighting is long, multi-fronted, and has an important moral and psychological dimension as well as a military one. That description applied to the Cold War, and it also applies to the current war against terrorism.

Since 1945, not many observers of the Soviet Union have been as naïve as Wallace; but Anne Applebaum believes that Westerners—especially on the political left—have never ceased to underestimate the radically evil nature of the Soviet system, and the degree of suffering it inflicted on its own citizens. And she is undoubtedly right to say that the dimensions of Stalin's repression, even if we do our best to assess it honestly, are hard to take in. For those of us who live in relative comfort and liberty, the story of the Soviet prison camps, through which as many as 18 million people may have passed

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over a period of roughly four decades, is a bone-chilling reminder of humanity's almost infinite capacity for cruelty, on a scale that defies belief. It is also a phenomenon in which many observers, including some who had little excuse, consciously chose not to believe. This was partly because the Soviet authorities, reinventing the Tsarist tradition of Potemkin villages designed to impress the foreigner, went to enormous lengths to hide the truth; and partly because some observers, knowingly or unknowingly, colluded with this cover-up because it was more comfortable to do so. And even for those who are determined to discover the facts in all their ugliness, the truth remains elusive; good people can differ about what exactly happened.

Stalin's Red Army salutes.

Stalin's Skeleton Closet

In a sense, as Applebaum suggests, this cover-up is still going on. For a brief period at the very end of the Soviet era, a dozen years ago, Moscow's public debates were dominated by fresh discoveries about the darkest aspects of the Soviet era and by loud cries of "never again." For an even briefer moment, it seemed as though these revelations had terminally discredited both the individuals (Stalin, Beria, and the likes of Nikishov) and the institutions (such as the Communist Party and the secret police) which had practiced repression on such a titanic scale.

But that moment has long since passed. Russia is now ruled by a former member of the secret police who enjoys huge popularity. After a decade in which the country seemed, more than once, to be teetering toward chaos, more people are willing to accept the proposition that it is worth sacrificing human rights for the sake of order and economic progress. Nor is Stalin himself seen as a purely villainous figure; having watched their country lose influence on the world stage, Russians are more inclined to voice a grudging respect for the man who, as they see it, raised that influence to unprecedented heights. While the archives that tell the story of Stalin's repression have not exactly snapped shut, there is less enthusiasm for opening them to all comers. The secret-police force—under its latest acronym, FSB—has regained enough institutional self-confidence to defend its record. The handful of Russians who campaign, in a disinterested way, for the observance of human rights and the discovery of historical facts, are once again a beleaguered minority, albeit not an actively persecuted one.

Nor is there any strong impulse in the West to prize new skeletons out of Russia's cupboard. In the current Western mood, almost any ally's blemishes can be overlooked as long as it delivers a modicum of cooperation in the war against terrorism. Encouraging Russia to look more critically at its own past is the last thing any Western government cares about; and if such pressure were applied, the reaction in Russia would be impatient, to put it mildly. While most people, both in Russia and the West, would accept that the Soviets imposed a regime of horrible repression under a thin, pseudo-judicial cover, there is little desire to know more about it.

Applebaum's purpose is to buck that trend. Taking advantage of the fact that some archives are now available, and that some former inmates remain alive and articulate, she has set out to write a comprehensive history of the Soviet penal camps for the general reader. She is not a full-time academic like Robert Conquest, who has devoted an entire career to investigating and chronicling Stalin's rule and can therefore integrate the gory details of his penal system into a broader theory about his regime. Nor, of course, does she have the lit-

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erary aspirations of an Alexander Solzhenitsyn or Evgeniya Ginzburg. Her writing is often powerful and incisive, but it achieves this effect through simplicity and restraint rather than stylistic flourish.

Applebaum's voice is that of a serious author and journalist who has interviewed 30 camp survivors, read scores of camp memoirs, traveled to Russia's far north, and drawn on government archives in Moscow and half a dozen other places. She chronicles the camps' evolution from the mid-1920s, when dissident socialists, intellectuals, monarchists, priests, and common criminals were shipped to the Arctic, to the early 1930s, when a vast network of penal colonies harnessed the labor of dispossessed peasants to feed Russia's crash industrialization program. By the late '30s, as the revolution gobbled more and more of its own children, the camps were filling up with loyal communists. By this stage, the authorities had ceased to pretend that the camps were a successful experiment in rehabilitation, or a monument to the dignity of labor. The crueler the camps became, the more fervently they were covered up.

Between 1941 and 1942, Applebaum writes, a quarter of the camps' inmates died of starvation. They shared this fate, of course, with many of their "free" compatriots, such as the besieged residents of Leningrad. The camp population rose again after World War II, as the regime turned xenophobic and anti-Semitic. But the new captives included former partisan fighters whose will was not easily broken; among the book's most powerful passages are the descriptions of the rebellions which prisoners mounted, both before and after Stalin's death in 1953. From the mid-1950s, when hundreds of thousands of prisoners were released, penal labor ceased to play a significant role in the economy. But political and religious dissenters continued to be sent to camp until the last few years of the Soviet regime. In 27 chapters with 2,157 footnotes, Applebaum dissects this epic of cruelty and suffering, chronologically and thematically. She recounts the diet, kept at the bare minimum to extract useful labor out of the prisoners; the sexual abuse; the egregious horror of transport to the camps by train or ship; the shady deals between prisoner and warder; and the shifting relations between political prisoners and urkas, or common criminals.

There is much to be said for her clinical approach to a subject on which any superlative of horror sounds cheap. But in a paradoxical way, the reader of this admirable and courageous book is left wanting more. Even if we cannot know, in the final analysis, why Stalin's terror was imposed, we are curious to know (at least at a subjective, psychological level) how it was imposed. How did the individuals who masterminded and ran the camp system rationalize their own behavior? How was it that so many of their victims retained their faith in communism, insisting that their own incarceration was merely a deviation from a well-founded political project? And among those survivors who took a more realistic view of their persecutors, what feelings persist? Applebaum introduces us briefly to a hospitable Muscovite grandmother who manages a flash of humor as she describes the clothes she wore in camp as a young woman. The reader wants to hear more from this wise lady—and from other camp survivors (including those who, amazingly enough, still defend Stalin) with whom we can engage as flesh-and-blood human beings. Strikingly absent from Applebaum's bibliography are the stories, which are readily available, of prisoners (including priests, mullahs, and Buddhist monks) who were incarcerated for their religious beliefs. To what extent were prisoners sustained by these beliefs and enabled to make sense of their suffering? These are questions which other writers, building on Applebaum's foundations, will want to address.

Looking Like Your Dog

Most of the time, she allows the facts to speak for themselves; her approach is not a didactic one, and that is one of the book's merits. But where her book does become didactic, especially at the beginning and the end, she will lose the sympathy of readers who in other respects warmly admire her. Sometimes legitimately, Applebaum attacks the failure of Westerners to grasp the real nature of Soviet communism, and to understand how single-mindedly that system had to be confronted. She is shocked by the fact that tourists in ex-communist countries snap up Soviet paraphernalia as mementos, although they would never buy Nazi trinkets. She is struck by the fact that a Western intellectual can admit to a communist or even Stalinist past without embarrassment, whereas to have flirted with Nazism is considered a sin beyond forgiveness. She also denounces Cold War revisionism—the idea that the Western side might have been at fault in the Soviet-American contest—whether it comes from iconoclasts like Gore Vidal or more unlikely quarters, such as Britain's *Spectator* magazine.

She is right to say that some Westerners underestimate the evil perpetrated under the Soviet flag. But surely, it is going too far to regard Western tactics during the Cold War as beyond reproach. It is true, of course, that any moral assessment of that period must take full account of the horrific nature of the Soviet penal system, and of the fact that whenever it had the chance, the Soviet regime imposed similar horrors on

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other countries. Western leaders would stand condemned by history if they had not worked tirelessly to avoid the imposition of that system on their own countries—and in the long run, to roll back repression inside the Soviet empire.

Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill at the 1943 Teheran Conference.

But the fact that one party to a conflict practiced terrible wickedness does not imply that the other behaved with disinterested perfection. With full knowledge of the Soviet Union's crimes against its own subjects, it is still possible to argue that at certain times, America and its allies stoked the fires of superpower competition and put humanity's survival at risk. The expression "military-industrial complex"—meaning an alliance of interests between the Pentagon and the arms industry which had an agenda of its own—was not coined by some soft-minded apologist for communism; it was coined by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a Republican and supreme commander of Allied forces during World War II. As Applebaum herself notes, Stalin's jailers—especially after 1945—shored up their own authority at home by citing the imperative to achieve and maintain parity with the country that had bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This does not necessarily imply that the Western side in the Cold War should have slackened its own efforts in the naïve hope that the Soviet regime would have softened as a result. But it is not being treacherous or soft-minded to study the Soviet-American contest as a self-compounding process in which one side's fearful and suspicious behavior fueled the other's.

Nor was the practice of terrible forms of repression, including the widespread use of incarceration, torture, and extrajudicial killing, any monopoly of the communist side in the Cold War. In countries like Chile, Iran, Indonesia, and Greece, precisely those crimes were perpetrated in the name of the "free world"—and they were justified, or actively abetted, by America's keenest Cold Warriors on grounds that "our sons of bitches" should be forgiven almost anything as long they fought the good fight against the Reds.

This does not mean that communism and liberal capitalism are morally equivalent routes to modernity and industrialization. At least in its purer form, the Cold War theory of convergence, which held that American and Soviet societies were becoming almost identical—was utter nonsense. But in any sustained conflict, whether personal or geopolitical, there is an ever-present possibility that the two sides will imitate certain aspects of each other's behavior. It is not only our spouses, or our pets that we grow to resemble, but also, to some extent, our enemies. To put it another way, our adversaries—ideological and geopolitical—do not merely threaten us by preparing to attack and defeat us; in a more subtle way, they also threaten us by making us more like them. It would be absurd to suggest that America itself had any equivalent of the Soviet gulag, but Cold War logic did make the United States more tolerant of its allies' repressive behavior. Analysts of the Cold War should be alive to these realities, even as they contemplate the staggering cruelty, and mendacity, of Stalin's Russia.

The force of this point goes far beyond historical analysis or philosophical speculation. It is immediately relevant for today's warriors in the battle against terrorism. If there is any part of the world where the apparatus and culture of Soviet repression—nighttime disappearances, cynical judges, isolation cells, physical and psychological torture—remains alive and well, it is on the territory of former Soviet republics, which have been closely allied with the United States in its war against the Taliban and al Qaeda. The ex-communist despots who rule these places have taken heart from the post-September 11 climate in world affairs. Their calculation is that as long as they provide the United States with military bases and air corridors, they will have a free hand to lock up their opponents and suppress freedom of speech. Should American policy vindicate this calculation? For the politicians, diplomats, and generals in the United States who are pondering this question, some sober reflection on the horrors of the Soviet gulag, skillfully and diligently documented in this book, would be time well spent. But it would be a pity if the only conclusion they draw is that America's enemies, past and present, are guilty of practicing terrible repression while simultaneously telling brazen lies. Unfortunately, America's friends commit those sins, too. ●

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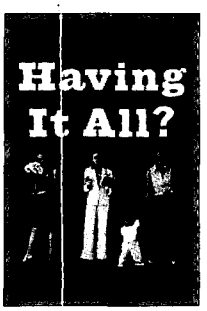
Post-Ghetto Fabulous

Coming to grips with black women's success.

BY DEBRA J. DICKERSON

WHEN IT COMES TO THE NATIONAL discourse, to be a black woman is to be that kid who moves to town the first week of February; you're going to get a fair number of Valentines, but your name will be misspelled and dutifully rendered in the handwriting of your new classmates' moms. Black women, when not scapegoats—think: single parent homes, juvenile crime, and welfare—are afterthoughts. Black men's problems, we are to believe, are black people's problems.

Yet, without much public notice, black women have been taking care of business, and not primarily via lawsuit and bullhorn. As Woody Allen noted, 99 percent of success is just showing up—for application deadlines, for class, for birth-control pill refills, for each day on the job—and that is simply what black women have done. No magic. No treachery against black men. The continuing existence of racism, they deduced, is simply no reason not to try. According to Veronica Chambers in her new book, *Having it All? Black Women and Success*, "In a single generation, black women's lives have improved vastly on key fronts: professionally, academically, and financially." In recent decades, she reports, the number of African-American women earning bachelor's degrees has increased by three-quarters; the numbers attending law or graduate school have more than doubled. Between 1988 and 1998, the number of black families earning $100,000 or more almost doubled, driven largely by black women's increased earning power. While white women still outearn black women in management positions, according to a 1998 survey, black women are beginning to inch ahead in such fields as sales and administrative support roles.



HAVING IT ALL?
Black Women and Success
by Veronica Chambers
Doubleday, $23.95

Thankfully, as this not-so-new reality begins to seep into America's consciousness, works on black women that sidestep both the incomprehensible ghetto of women's studies and the "Girlfriend" aisle at Barnes & Noble are finally beginning to surface. In March 2002, *The Washington Monthly* published Paul Offner's analysis of the diverging fortunes of black men and women. Last month, *Newsweek* published a cover package on the black professional gender gap and its consequences. Eventually, all of America will have to notice that the American business district teems with black women in professional dress, however absent black men might be.

Having it All? operates as a social and cultural history of black women's portrayals in the business world (there is much more to Aunt Jemima than you think), entertainment, and the news media. Unbeknownst to me, Claire Huxtable almost single-handedly inspired the studious segment of the hip-hop generation to believe they, too, could have—sans nanny—a husband, five kids, a lavish Brooklyn brownstone, and a law career, while always looking fabulous. Primarily, however, the work is interview-driven, which is both a strength and a weakness. Anecdotes, however telling, are neither reliable nor replicable. Sometimes, the parade of stalwart black women—from attorney to museum grande dame to White House operative to actress—is feel-goody and somewhat superficial, like a public service announcement for Black History Month. On the other hand, the individual women's approaches to succeeding in highly competitive, "Oh great, I'm the only black person again" environments are both a revelation to the uninitiated and a

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cosmic props for those who pulled it off. Their anecdotes live and breathe our complicated racial and gender realities as no pile of statistics ever could. There's a gospel song to encapsulate every moment in a black person's life; the correct one here is Aretha Franklin's "(My Soul Looks Back and Wonders) How I Got Over." It makes you proud, it makes America shut up and take notice. Just like a feel-goody, superficial Black History Month PSA.

One of the few things America does tend to know about black women, successful or struggling, is that they're often alone, a reality which permeates *Having It All?* Professional, academic, and financial gains are wonderful things, but they don't give you a foot rub after a hard day in the operating room. A significant other does. That's one reason why the title, *Having It All?* is a question and not a declaration of victory. Chambers perhaps takes too lightly high-achieving black women's lack of husbands and children in her focus on exploring the daylight between black and white women's workplace realities. She writes that "many of the 30-something and even 40-something women interviewed in this book are childless. Unlike the panicked portraits of professional women depicted in the media, the women I spoke to routinely expressed no sense of regret, no Lichtenstein-like cartoon horror of 'Damn, I forgot to have a baby.' Leaving aside the soupçon of contempt for white women's stereotypical neuroses, it is possible that these women were putting their best feminist feet forward to fortify both themselves and the women who will follow them—in their spinsterhood as well as their achievements. Speaking as a high-achieving black woman who married, to intergalactic surprise, at 40, solitude was the price I was willing to pay to achieve my dreams. It was not my preference. It was not easy. I was lonely. Married, to a *good* man, is better. Even if he can't figure out how to get dishes into the dishwasher. (In Chambers's defense, there is an entire chapter on black professional stay-at-home moms.)

It is crucial to divine whether black women "lack" families or "opt against" them—a choice that, to be sure, some number of women consciously make. More power to them. Having my son 22 months ago put my career into a tailspin from which it has yet to recover. For me, taking my roles as wife and mother seriously means I will never achieve all of which I am capable. But to ignore this important distinction between choosing and accepting solitude is to do black women, and the very institution of family, a disservice. Two of three black marriages end in divorce, far more than other groups; less than one-third of black women are married. The black-white marriage rate is composed primarily of black men marrying out. And, as has been widely reported, six of 10 black children are raised by their mothers alone, a situation which, barring major parental dysfunction, is a tragedy for mother, father, and children alike. When it comes to domestic arrangements, blacks are America's perennial loss leaders. As scholar Orlando Patterson put it, African Americans are the most unpartnered and alienated people in the world; we ought to be trying to remedy that, not make ourselves feel good about it. Certainly, as Chambers notes, blacks live in a tradition of extended and created families—but not because we prefer it. That was what was required to survive in a hostile environment; our whole existence in America has been improvisational. Isn't it time yet to write it down and figure a few key things out? Like why black men and black women can't cooperate? Many black women are lonely and overburdened, many black men are deprived of their children's love, and there's nothing to be lost by saying so. Hillary Clinton, Elizabeth Dole, and Margaret Thatcher all have husbands. Why don't Condi and Oprah? Preordained lovelessness should not be the price anyone pays for success. Chambers, however, makes a point in this regard that I had not before encountered but which rang immediately true; some of these "can't find a good man" claimants may well be gay. Homosexuality is still considered an unforgiveable perversion among many blacks, often more so for women than men. In the Southern Baptist church I grew up in, it was often stated that a daughter who was a murderer was preferable to one who was a "bull dagger."

Disagreements aside, Chambers's book does much to make visible the invisible lives of those black women who are not on crack or trying to move from welfare to work, the only kind of black women most of America seems to think there are. What is perhaps most bracing about *Having It All?* is the unapologetic voices of young, post-Movement women, the ones that all the marching was for. Take Crystal Ashby, an antitrust lawyer for a major Chicago oil company. "Her education also heightened her sense of entitlement," writes Chambers. "From an early age Crystal remembers thinking, 'Why not me?' 'I always believed that someday I could live in a house like the ones I went to school around, that I could live that lifestyle.' But it's also true that Ashby's early years of attending white prep schools has given her a lifetime of training in keeping the peace. 'The reality is a lot of my friends are white, and a lot of my friends are black,' she says. 'I work in an environment where my exposure is primarily white. You can either be a loner or assimilate. These are the people I spend my days with, and I like my days to be pleasant.'"

The women profiled here tend not to believe that racism, while still real, defines or limits them in any practical sense. They are free. As free of Al Sharpton and the NAACP as of whites. The marching worked. If you want to know what success looks like on a black woman, read this book.●

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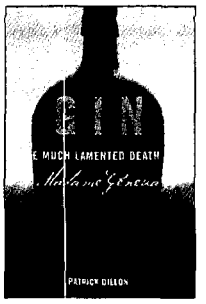
Remission of Gin

What 18th-century London can teach us about fighting vice.

BY JUSTIN PETERS

I LIKE GIN. ALWAYS HAVE. IT REMINDS ME of Christmas, and the elderly. I once got laughed out of a trendy Dupont Circle bar for ordering a gin and tonic, but I can't help it: While others of my generation prefer drinks that sparkle and taste of fruit, I'm stuck on that tried-and-true standby.

Perhaps I was just born 300 years too late. In the early 1700s, every Tom, Dick, and Harriet in London was downing gin night and day. The gin craze that swept through the city resulted in such demagoguery, prohibition, rioting, and morning-after headaches that author Patrick Dillon aptly dubs it "the crack epidemic of the 18th century." This story is skillfully recounted in *Gin*, Dillon's rousing cultural history of drunkenness and despair in 18th-century Britain. Deftly weaving original research, trenchant analysis, and an engaging prose style, Dillon recaptures the spirit of an age that in many ways bears a strong resemblance to our own.



GIN:
The Much Lamented Death of Madam Geneva
by Patrick Dillon
Norton & Co., $26.95

When Dutch prince William of Orange ascended the English throne in 1689 in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, one of his first official acts was to join the League of Augsburg's war on France. As a wartime measure, William banned the import of French products, including cheese, bad manners, and brandy. Brandy was extremely popular in England, its demise sure to be much lamented. So in order to head off the complaints of the nation's drinkers, William signed a measure encouraging the domestic distillation of spirits from corn.

Backroom distilleries soon sprang up everywhere, dripping out various noxious liquors at a feverish pace. Paramount among these homegrown spirits was gin, or, as she was commonly known, "Madam Geneva." Flavored with juniper berries and packing a wallop, Madam Geneva seamlessly supplanted brandy in the public memory, and gin drinking soon became the favorite pastime of the damned and downtrodden.

Lower-class English life in the early 18th century was nasty, brutish, and short. Dubious sanitation, stifling debt laws, and a general sense of squalor combined to make the prospect of getting "drunk for a penny, dead drunk for tuppence" remarkably attractive. In a world where the conspicuous disparity between rich and poor was inescapable, people welcomed every chance they had to forget their problems. Dillon ably describes the speed with which inexpensive and widely available gin became "the avenging angel of the slums, and the comforter of the poor; she was the curse of London and the friend of market-women."

This dichotomy between aristocratic and lower-class London is central to Dillon's thesis: that London's gin craze, viewed through the woozy lens of alcohol abuse, was really about class struggle. "The thing conservatives hated most about drink," he argues, "was the transformation it offered; the way it broke down traditional barriers. That was what they hated most about the entire age." So it's not altogether surprising that, soon after its arrival, conservatives began working to outlaw gin, argu-

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ing that its evils were "so many, so great, so destructive to the lower, poorer sort of people." Dillon presents his case well, seamlessly integrating his extensive research into the broader narrative. But the volume of evidence he marshals occasionally works against him. As the accounts of gin-induced crimes and deaths pile up, it's hard not to suspect that Madam Geneva's well-heeled opponents may have been motivated as much by the reasonable wish not to have to step over dead bodies in London's gutters as by any desire to oppress the lower classes.

18th-century engraver William Hogarth's depiction of London's impoverished gin-drinkers.

Even so, when public drunkenness reached epidemic proportions, the laws passed treated the common man much more harshly than the country-estate tippler. Certainly gin advocates recognized this disparity, claiming that the laws specifically targeted the poor and dirty, while Sir Drink-A-Lot and Lord Sousebury went unpunished. When personal rights are abridged in the name of the public good, conflict usually ensues, and gin-soaked London was no exception. Every time the government attempted to regulate the gin trade, plebeians rioted in the streets, preachers thundered in pulpits and pamphlets, and, in back-alley dram shops, things continued much as they had before.

Eventually, though, all crazes end. By the late 1750s, Londoners had apparently had enough, and gin drinking ceased to be a public menace. Dillon attributes this to wiser governmental policies (read: supply-side taxation), and the rise of the middle class. A spate of public reforms had unexpectedly rendered London livable, giving rise to a new class of people who saved their money rather than spent it and preferred sober entertainments, such as prayer. With the decline of the vice-addled populace, writes Dillon, Madam Geneva became the benign lady we know and enjoy today.

So was the gin craze a function of urban decay? Dillon suggests that it was, and that it has implications for modern times. He draws a largely convincing parallel with the war on drugs. After all, both crazes featured rampant substance abuse and impotent governmental attempts at curtailing it. But Dillon's analysis is hobbled by a few unresolved issues. Gin drinking was much more unabashedly mainstream than drug use is, as were its proponents, which rendered gin advocacy more socially acceptable than, say, marijuana advocacy. Madam Geneva boasted Daniel Defoe and several powerful lobbying groups among her supporters, respected voices that Parliament could not ignore and that could speak freely without fear of being marginalized. The best that drug war opponents can muster up, however, is Snoop Dogg—one reason why their cause has not been embraced by the mainstream.

But that debate may be academic. Dillon makes the point that, once the genie is out of the bottle, so to speak, it can't be legislated back in—though that hasn't stopped people from trying throughout the centuries. As long as pedants and public moralists feel compelled to impose behavioral standards on the poor and disenfranchised, there will be gin laws, well-intentioned but ineffective; and as long as people require an escape from the toil of everyday life, there will be gin. Drawn from the past, applied to the present, this is the lesson of Dillon's fine book. It is history as it should be: entertaining without being glib, informative without being didactic. *Gin* might not be as harmful as its spirituous namesake, but it is certainly just as addictive. ●

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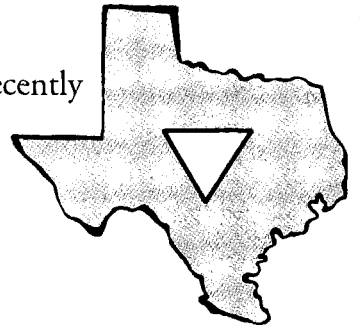
Tidbits & Outrages

Separation anxiety

Though Texas does not recognize gay marriage, a state judge recently granted the state's first gay divorce. The action dissolved a civil union made in Vermont, where it was legally contracted.



Did the chief hire a lucky P.I. to find out if brothels charge door fees?

To overcome a $704 million deficit, the Nevada legislature is considering what one reporter called "the ultimate sin tax"—taxing the state's brothels. There is some debate over legality. The "entertainment admission levy" applies to spectator events. Says the state Taxation Department chief: "I believe the gals are classified as independent contractors. But if they're charging an admissions charge and there's a group of spectators, then yes, it could apply."

Was it the ghost of the late budget surplus?

Paranormal researchers believe they have discovered a ghost in North Carolina's state capitol building. They've photographed "floating orbs of energy" and recorded whispers, and claim to have spotted the ghost, dressed in Reconstruction-era clothing and seated in the third row of the House chamber.

No more French kissing, either

The owner of a North Carolina diner, angered by France's refusal to support a U.S. invasion of Iraq, is taking an unusual revenge. "We're no longer serving 'french' fries," says a sign in the diner's window. "We now serve 'freedom' fries." For similar reasons, a New Jersey restaurateur poured $1,000 worth of French wine down the toilet and removed it from his menu.

Fries Art by Hope Glastris

Coming next year, a campaign to canonize Yoda

Through a massive Internet lobbying campaign, enthusiasts for the movie *Star Wars* convinced Britain's census department to include "Jedi" as an official religion on census forms, and 390,000 of the 52 million respondents to the 2001 census chose it.

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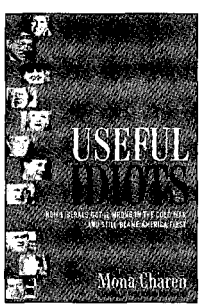
Political Booknotes

Pink Pander

By Jamie Malanowski

Useful Idiots, THE NEW BOOK BY conservative pundit Mona Charen that criticizes the left for 75 years of misjudgments about communism, takes its title from a phrase supposedly used by Joseph Stalin to characterize Soviet sympathizers in the West. The first big question that presents itself about this book is: Why now? The book contains little that's new; after all, it's not like the right has thought the left has been correct about communism all these years, nor is it the case that communism is about to rear its ugly head. Perhaps Charen merely looked at the titles in Regnery Publishing's expansive "Blame the Liberals" series of best-sellers, and realized that now would be an opportune time to snatch this niche. Charen tries to explain the timing by connecting liberals' errors about the late communist systems with their brand-new-but-familiar errors about Islamism. This happens to be the least convincing part of her argument. However, much of the rest—mysterious timing aside—is for a squishy liberal uncomfortably strong. "One of the most celebrated heroes of American history, Charles Lindbergh, saw his reputation shredded due to his failures to perceive the monumental evil of Nazism," she writes. "Yet American liberals who committed the identical sin vis-a-vis the Communists ... have paid no price in credibility for their appalling judgment."



USEFUL IDIOTS:
How Liberals Got It Wrong in the Cold War and Still Blame America First
by Mona Charen
Regnery Publishing, $27.95

That's a very good point. It's one most liberals have never come to grips with, one that's wrapped up with their problems formulating policies on defense and military force, which hobbles their ability to offer credible national leadership. Why did liberals so often find themselves giving the benefit of the doubt to a bunch of thugs? Why did we apologize for so much? Why did we excuse so much? Why did we ever think people like Khrushchev or Brezhnev had any credibility at all? In a book that is by Regnery standards pretty gloat-lite, Charen dredges up many examples of liberals who bent over backward to say good things—often transparently stupid good things—about communist regimes. She predictably dredges up quotes from all the lefties who hang like millstones around the necks of progressives, but she adds plenty of Kumbaya-sounding rhetoric from more level-headed types. And frankly, it's embarrassing to read George McGovern's romantic portraits of Castro, I.F. Stone's gooey, vaguely erotic sketch of Che Guevera, Harrison Salisbury's starry-eyed opinions of Yuri Andropov, Chris Dodd's carefully parsed assessments of the Sandanista leadership, and Al Gore's ardent defenses of a nuclear freeze. She has Robert Scheer saying nice things about North Korea, for pete's sake! It makes everybody seem skin-crawlingly naive.

But what Charen has really done is the rhetorical equivalent of showing the world these liberals' driver's license photographs—she's chosen the worst quotes in the worst context and ignored the rest. Obviously people had opinions that turned out to be wrong, and some were wrong a lot. But there are worse things in life than being wrong; a refusal to consider options and alternative approaches is just as serious an error. More to the point, there was substantial bipartisan agreement about American foreign policy since the Second World War. There was vociferous disagreement about policies and approaches, but in the main, both wings of both parties acted on the assumption that the Soviet Union was America's adversary and posed a threat to our security, that communism was antithetical to our system, and that we needed to fund a large defense establishment and deploy forces around the world in order to support those positions. Charen acts as though there was a large liberal faction that wanted us to pull out of NATO or ground the Air Force. That's just not so.

It's also true that Charen makes her case knowing full well how the story turns out. From that exalted position, she is happy to argue that Reagan's hard-line policy toward the Soviet Union and communist expansion was the necessary one to defeat it. Certainly, Reagan's combination of rhetoric and military appropriations helped to undermine the regime. But for all the considerable credit due Reagan, the weakness of the Soviet regime was a factor, as was the policy and personality of Gorbachev. If Charen wants to argue that harder-line policies should have been applied throughout the Cold War, then it seems just as fair to ask whether a Brezhnev—a far bigger thug than Gorbachev—would have reacted to Reagan in the same way. Here's where Charen's argument falters. It's one thing to demand some accountability from liberals, quite another to argue, as Charen does, that liberal positions throughout the Cold War constituted policies of appeasement. Throughout the Cold War, there were a mix of policies that liberals supported: containment, détente, non-proliferation, and arms control. Oddly, a lot of conservatives supported that mix as well. For Charen's arguments to work, Richard "Détente" Nixon would have to be considered a liberal. Thanks, but he's not on our team.

Charen wonders why liberals were so weak on communism when they had been so strong against Nazism. She argues that Nazis were "the perfect enemy for America," because their beliefs were so antithetical to our ideals. "But Communists paid lip service to liberty, and pretended to achieve equality. Communists in America participated in the civil rights movement and seemed on the right side of the conflict in South Africa." She should think a little harder about her observation. Yes, communists were liberals' friends; but more importantly, anti-communists were the liberals' enemies. Most anti-communists were also anti-labor. Most were anti-integration. Most supported a lot of repressive regimes in the name of anti-communism. There are a lot of issues on which

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anti-communists undermined their own moral authority. Liberals need to come to terms with their mistakes about communism, but conservatives have a lot of laundry to wash as well. I doubt we'll see a Regnery book on that subject, though.

Charen is weakest when she tries to argue that in the same way liberals were wrong about communism, they are wrong about Islamism. She cites a number of things liberals like Michael Moore said after 9/11 that seem to her to be patently stupid. They seem stupid to me, too, but so do things that Jerry Falwell and Ann Coulter said. Among the comments Charen finds objectionable is this one by Norman Mailer: "Americans should reflect on and try to understand why so many people feel a revulsion toward the U.S." Mailer may be a member in good standing of the Blame America First crowd that gives a life purpose to folks like Charen, but it doesn't seem to me that figuring out how American policies contributed to the tangle of problems we're facing puts one in the al Qaeda Booster Club.

Liberals are not apt to read *Useful Idiots*, and that's too bad; if they were honest, they would use it to critique their own assumptions and proclivities. Of course, if Mona Charen were honest, she would similarly critique her own.

JAMIE MALANOWSKI *is a New York writer.*

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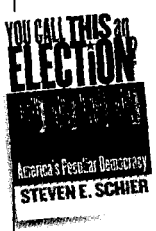

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Revolutionary War

By Phillip Carter

Soldiers love to tell war stories. Bruce Berkowitz is not a soldier—he's a former CIA analyst who has worked for the Senate Intelligence Committee and the secretary of defense. But he believes himself to be qualified to talk about war the way grunts do because he believes modern wars will be fought as much with information as ammunition.

"Today the ability to collect, communicate, process, and protect information is the most important factor defining military power," Berkowitz writes in his book, *The New Face of War*. "As the theories and technology of information-driven warfare have developed since Desert Storm, warfare has changed. The ability to maneuver quickly and concentrate firepower have become less crucial. The new capabilities that decide who wins [include] the ability to pick off your adversary from a distance with a single shot, the ability to maintain a stealthy network of forces ... [and] the ability to control information so that you can complete your decision cycle before the enemy completes his."

It's easy to understand how superior information helped U.S. forces succeed in, say, the Gulf War or in Kosovo. But as Berkowitz explains, information was also a key factor for forces like the Mogadishu mob that fought the U.S. Army in Somalia in 1993. It relied on a network of cellular phones and burning tires to send information about U.S. troop movements.

Unlike much of the military literature published since the Gulf War, Berkowitz does not simply tout the "revolution in military affairs"—the belief that technological advances are central to military power. In *The New Face of War*, he argues instead that a combination of "people, ideas, and hardware" determines victory. To make his case, Berkowitz draws on four major theories of warfare that have emerged in the last three decades. The first, known as "asymmetric warfare," posits that one should use one's strength to attack an enemy's weakness. Though many people

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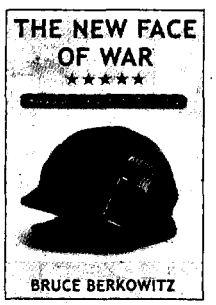
mistakenly believe this concept originated with guerrilla warfare or terrorism, its lineage dates to Sun Tzu and his ancient work, *The Art of War*. More recently, the United States embraced it as a way of balancing the scales during the Cold War. Unable to compete directly with the Soviet Union on a tank-for-tank, plane-for-plane basis, U.S. leaders recognized that by emphasizing their strength—such as the ballistic-missile submarine fleet—against areas of Soviet weakness, they could prevail. More recently, al Qaeda used asymmetric warfare against the United States; instead of attacking "hard" targets, like military installations, the terrorists bypassed the conventional battlefield entirely, striking directly at civilian targets to spread terror and hurt the economy.



THE NEW FACE OF WAR: How War Will Be Fought in the 21st Century
by Bruce Berkowitz
Free Press, $26.00

The second part of Berkowitz's theory hinges on information technology. Nearly 200 years ago, Clausewitz wrote of the "fog of war," and how it obscured a commander's ability to see the battlefield. Today, field commanders can see themselves, the enemy, and the terrain through this fog with the help of information technology. Moreover, Berkowitz writes, commanders now have the ability to attack their opponents' information systems and blind or confuse them.

"Network-centric warfare" is the third foundation. Old armies were organized in extremely rigid ways because their communications were short-range and linear. Modern armies, Berkowitz argues, will increasingly disperse and work like the Special Forces teams in Afghanistan, supported by global satellite communications.

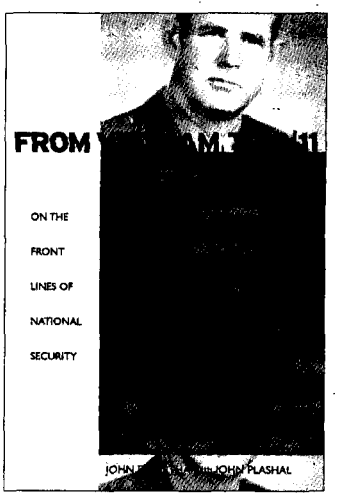
Finally, Berkowitz borrows heavily from the work of U.S. Air Force Col. John Boyd, whose ideas about military decision processes revolutionized the way America fought in the 1980s and 1990s. Boyd originally set out to determine why American pilots shot down so many MiGs in the Korean War, despite having planes generally regarded as inferior. Boyd discovered that the American fighters were more maneuverable than their Soviet-made counterparts. Over the course of a dogfight, this gave U.S. pilots an advantage that let them get behind their enemy and shoot him down. The critical variable was how fast a U.S. pilot could move from one decision to the next—how fast he could adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

This theory became known as "OODA" (for Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act) and came to inform military decision making at every level. In the context of America's war on terrorism, some have advanced this theory as an explanation for why the United States was so ill-prepared for September 11. Even had we known about al Qaeda's intentions, this line of thinking goes, it would have taken the U.S. bureaucracy so long to observe, orient, decide, and act on the threat that the terrorists would still have had ample time to strike. OODA explains nearly any cat-and-mouse game of warfare: The winner is the one who can decide and act the fastest.

"There is no single approach that is always best, but the ultimate objective is always the same: collect, process, and apply information faster and better than your opponent," writes Berkowitz, building on Boyd's work. "Whoever gets to the end of his OODA loop first gets to take the first shot. In modern warfare, that's often the only shot." This statement rings especially true in the context of terrorism, where the first shot can kill thousands of civilians.

Ultimately, as Berkowitz hints, the debate over the new face of warfare is more than academic. Predictions about future conflicts drive Pentagon decisions about where to allocate resources. Next year, the Pentagon's budget will exceed $380 billion dollars—roughly half the amount the CIA estimates is spent by the entire world on defense. It's also a reason for pause. Much of the work of anticipating future wars is performed by the same defense contractors and Pentagon-funded think tanks that stand to collect those billions. To them, the new face of war is much more than a night of telling war stories; it's a game of high-stakes poker.

PHILLIP CARTER, *a former Army officer, attends UCLA Law School and writes on legal and military issues.*



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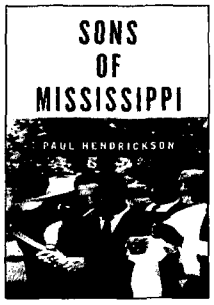
Rising Sons

By Wen Stephenson

On Sept. 27, 1962, in Oxford, Miss., among the elms and oaks and catalpa trees on the campus of Ole Miss, a gifted young freelancer snapped a photograph for *Life* magazine of seven Mississippi sheriffs having too good a time. It's not an icon of the 1960s, but it should be, says Paul Hendrickson. They're standing, "these seven faces of Deep South apartheid," around the hood of a squad car, and the handsome one in the middle—head of the state sheriffs' association, cigarette between his grinning teeth—is taking a practice swing with a billy club to the amusement and grim appreciation of his colleagues. It was three days before James Meredith would become the first African American to enroll at the University of Mississippi (accompanied by more than 500 federal marshals and several thousand U.S. troops), and these sheriffs, in their white shirts and dark ties, had come from all over the state to help keep their fellow Mississippian from setting foot on the sacred campus. (A senior at Ole Miss at the time named Trent Lott—head cheerleader, president of Sigma Nu, and future majority leader of the U.S. Senate—stayed away from the ensuing violence that weekend, in which two were killed and hundreds injured, but distinguished himself in the effort to keep his fraternity segregated nationally.)



SONS OF MISSISSIPPI: A Story of Race and Its Legacy
by Paul Hendrickson
Alfred A. Knopf, $26.95

For Hendrickson, a former *Washington Post* reporter who was born in California but raised partly in the Deep South, that photograph contains an essential underlying story of the Battle of Oxford and the larger civil rights struggle, a story of race and its legacy that holds the key to much of the past 40 years. In *Sons of Mississippi*, Hendrickson takes a rare approach to this subject, focusing on the white supremacists themselves, rather than the familiar, and safer, heroic narrative of the people who rose up to defeat them. His driving impulse is to get beneath the surface and beyond the frame of that photograph in order to see these seven Southerners, and their children and grandchildren after them, as complex individuals rather than two-dimensional caricatures. He knows that racism—even in a time and place as benighted as Mississippi in 1962—is never monolithic, and is careful to highlight the nuances of racial feeling along a spectrum that runs from virulent bigotry to complacent (and complicit) passivity. He knows that the only way to understand the inhumanity in that photograph is to make the men who populate it human.

Two of those men were still alive when Hendrickson started the project; all of them are well remembered by family, friends, and colleagues. One of the deceased, the former sheriff of Pascagoula—alcoholic, viciously bigoted, and beloved of his men—has an FBI file on him big enough, yet maddeningly inconclusive enough (full of "redactions" pointing all the way to J. Edgar Hoover) to be the stuff of legend. For more than one of them, Hendrickson unearths evidence of Klan and Klan-related activities, though he's unable to prove anything, and none can be linked directly to any civil-rights crime.

But as Hendrickson states at the outset, his book isn't really about the men in the photograph. "Instead," he writes, "it's about what's deeply connected but is off the page, out of sight, past the borders. It's about what has *come down* from this photograph." And so the portraits of those men are followed by longer, more intimate profiles of some of the descendants, those he calls "the inheritors," in whose stories he finds "some modest surprises and small redemptions and blades of latter-day racial hope."

There's Sheriff Tommy Ferrell, who succeeded his father as sheriff of Natchez (Adams County), keeps a portrait of Nathan Bedford Forrest—co-founder of the KKK—on his office wall, and has nonetheless risen to national prominence in his determination to modernize the image of Mississippi law enforcement. (And whose proud political demeanor conceals an edge of defensiveness about his father's role in the 1960s.) There's Tommy's son Ty Ferrell, a U.S. Border Patrol agent in Santa Teresa, N.M.—compassionate, painfully self-conscious, prone to tears—who seems to carry around with him the entire burden of the family's racial past. And there's John Cothran—grandson and namesake of Sheriff John Ed Cothran of infamous Greenwood (Leflore County) in the Delta—a "working stiff" whose good heart and bad temper have left him with four broken marriages, who works as a floor manager at Home Depot and a second job stocking shelves at the Kroger supermarket to pay child support for the kids he loves, and whose ambition is a double-wide trailer in an all-white development outside Senatobia. (And yet whose humanity toward, and willingness to stand up for, his black co-workers and friends give him a shot at redemption that is neither simple nor sentimental.)

Hendrickson succeeds, movingly and compellingly, in these portraits of contemporary Southerners. But his feel for the deeper Southern past, and for the broader context of Southern politics,

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is less sophisticated and less satisfying. That is to say, Hendrickson gives us vivid pictures of who the men in that photograph were in 1962, and of what they passed on to their descendants, but he makes almost no effort to explain how they got that way—almost forgetting, it seems, that these men themselves were descendants, inheritors of the forces that shaped their South. Despite a central chapter in which he weaves a kind of historical essay on the events surrounding the Battle of Oxford and its aftermath, I found myself searching for some analysis of the social and political dynamics of race and class that run as an inescapable current through Southern history.

How, for example, did the poor and working-class backgrounds of these men, their lack of education, and their place within the stratified society of white Mississippi, affect their racial fear? How did white supremacism, and the populist politics of racial solidarity, offer them a kind of perverse security within that world? How did the tangled history of race and class in the Jim Crow South set the social boundaries and norms of behavior in their time and place? Hendrickson hints elusively at such questions, but fails to confront them.

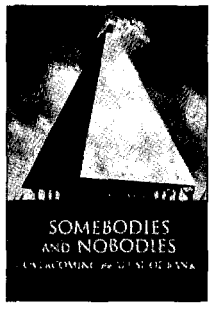
Interestingly, near the outset Hendrickson uses a metaphor of bigotry as a kind of genetic inheritance. "How," he asks, "did a gene of intolerance and racial fear mutate as it passed sinuously through time and family bloodstreams?" Only a metaphor, perhaps, but an unfortunate one: suggesting, even if inadvertently, that bigots are somehow born and not made. But history is more than the sum of family traits, and the seductions of the Southern family romance do not relieve us of the responsibility to ask tough questions about social and political realities that are all too much with us today. Just ask Trent Lott, the son of a sharecropper who scrambled his way into the warm embrace of white-supremacist Ole Miss, and whose own Southern legacy finally caught up with him.

WEN STEPHENSON *is managing editor of the Web edition of PBS's* Frontline *(pbs.org/frontline) and the former editor of* The Atlantic Online.

Rank Prejudice

By Robert Knisely

ONCE UPON A TIME, ROBERT W. Fuller was a Somebody: physics professor at Columbia and author of a classic textbook. In 1970—the year of the Kent State massacre—Fuller, then only 33, was named president of Oberlin College. After four tumultuous years fully engaged with students protesting both the war and their role in college governance, he left to "recharge his batteries." But after this sabbatical, he discovered, his old colleagues wouldn't listen to his ideas, and soon wouldn't return his calls. Without an institution backing him, he was a Nobody. He learned about what he calls the Somebody Mystique from the outside. His new book, *Somebodies and Nobodies*, grew out of that experience.



SOMEBODIES AND NOBODIES
Overcoming the Abuse of Rank
by Robert W. Fuller
New Society Pub., $23.95

The problem, Fuller came to realize, was rankism. By his definition, rankism is the abuse of rank—the denial of the inherent dignity of every person. Rankism is everywhere, he claims, and makes almost everyone feel invisible and inconsequential at one time or another in his or her life, whether during the first days of junior high school, starting college or a new job, being unemployed, or even awaking one day to realize you're retired. Being a Nobody means not getting your calls returned or your résumé read—not being recognized as inherently worthy of attention. In less genteel surroundings, it means never finding work and always going hungry. Relations between parent and child, teacher and student, doctor and patient, and employer and employee are too often soured by rankism, says Fuller. Indignity in the home stunts personal growth; in the academy it sabotages learning; in the shop it taxes productivity. International rankism by the United States evokes terrorists in the developing world, where most people live in chronic indignity.

"The fact that life isn't fair doesn't mean we have to be unfair to each other," Fuller argues. Now that racism and sex-

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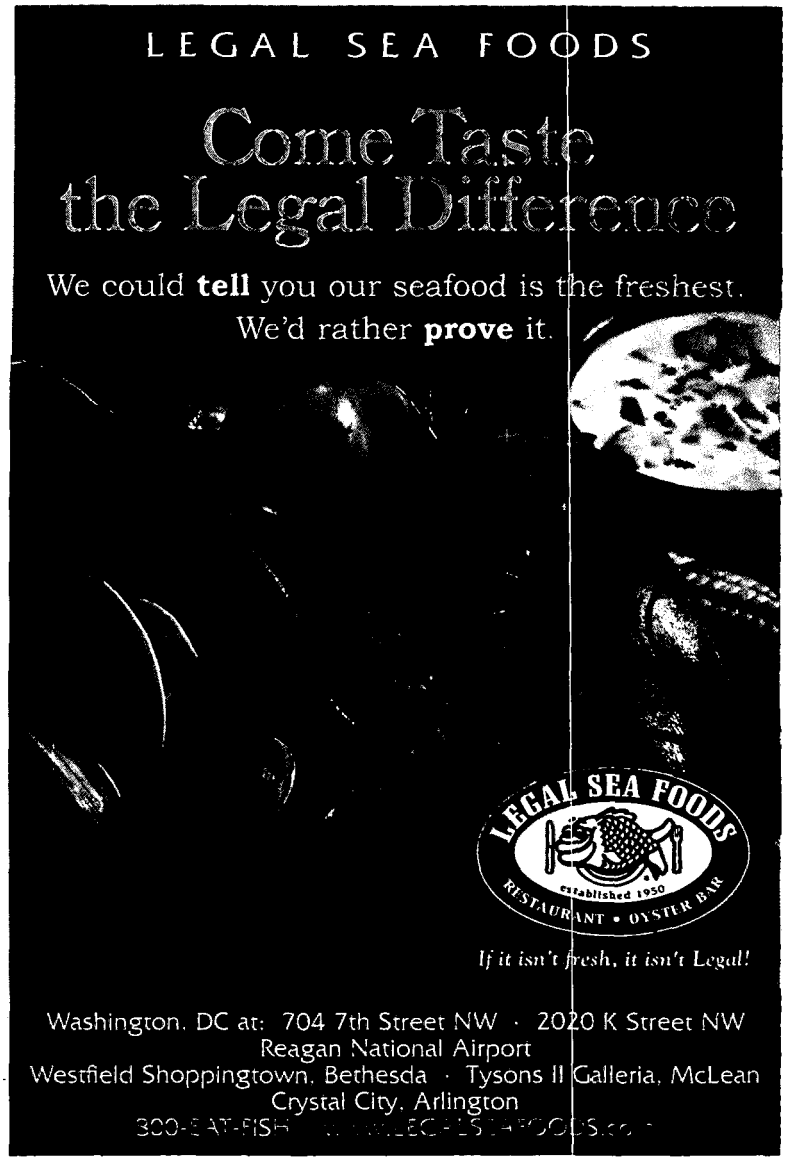

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ism are on the run, he believes, rankism—"the mother of all -isms"—should be the next to go. Fuller believes that all the other "-isms" are but subspecies of rankism, which must first be called out wherever and whenever it appears, and then negotiated out of all of our social institutions. What the world needs, he argues, is a Nobody Revolution, a Dignitarian Revolution, leading to a redistribution of rank as a first step toward global economic justice. (Who Fuller thinks should foment this revolution—graduate teaching assistants? The Roman Catholic laity?—is not entirely clear.)

Fuller admits that *Somebodies and Nobodies* is a personal book, neither scholarly nor academic. And though "rankism" sounds hopelessly P.C.—the kind of problem we didn't know we had until some well-meaning Barnard peer counselor thought it up—it's hard to disagree that abusing one's authority is a bad thing. But while Fuller acknowledges that "rank" is essential for humans working in hierarchies, and that striving for more rank brings one recognition and power—things that most people enjoy—his distinctions between rank and rankism are hard to follow. In practice, it is apparently all right for physics professors to return, unread, manuscripts from hopeful but unlettered supplicants who claim to refute Einstein, since otherwise the professors would not have time to read each other's manuscripts. On the other hand, he says, it is never all right to bark at waitstaff for any real or imagined transgressions.

Fuller believes that rankism is ubiquitous and eternal, but that's not necessarily true. In the business world, for instance, hierarchy—which Fuller tags as the progenitor of rankism—is slowly becoming yesterday's mode of organizing human activity. Market-based and decentralized, network-based activities are becoming widely adopted as more-viable alternatives. Rankism may turn out to be yesterday's problem; as more young Americans become entrepreneurs, smaller and flatter organizations will reduce the range of rankism. (Certainly rankism is, to some degree, a peculiarly Western institution: A Zen master might well worry about a student's inner state if the student became preoccupied by rank, either high or low.)

Since the problems described in *Somebodies and Nobodies* are anecdotal—albeit universal—it's hard to evaluate Fuller's argument that the Somebodies will benefit by eliminating rankism when dealing with Nobodies. And, of course, it is the Somebodies who must change their behavior. Nevertheless, the case can be made. For his book *Good to Great*, James Collins sifted through the 1435 firms that have ever been in the Fortune 500. He found only 11 firms that demonstrated periods of exceptional performance; that is, generated cumulative stock returns that beat the general stock market by an average of seven times in 15 years. Notably, all 11 had CEOs who were promoted from within, intensely focused on success, and—most interestingly—humble. "Humble" is Collins's word, and by it he means a CEO who would listen to anyone, anytime, who might have something to offer to the CEO's quest for success. In other words, these CEOs eliminated every trace of rankism from their work lives—and they, and their companies, won big.

Robert Fuller's book paints a compelling portrait of an unhappy world, but fails at leading us to a better one. *Somebodies and Nobodies* boasts no fewer than 30 prepublication endorsements. Twenty-seven of the endorsers are identified by their institutional connections or the books they've published.

Robert Knisely is a freelance writer.

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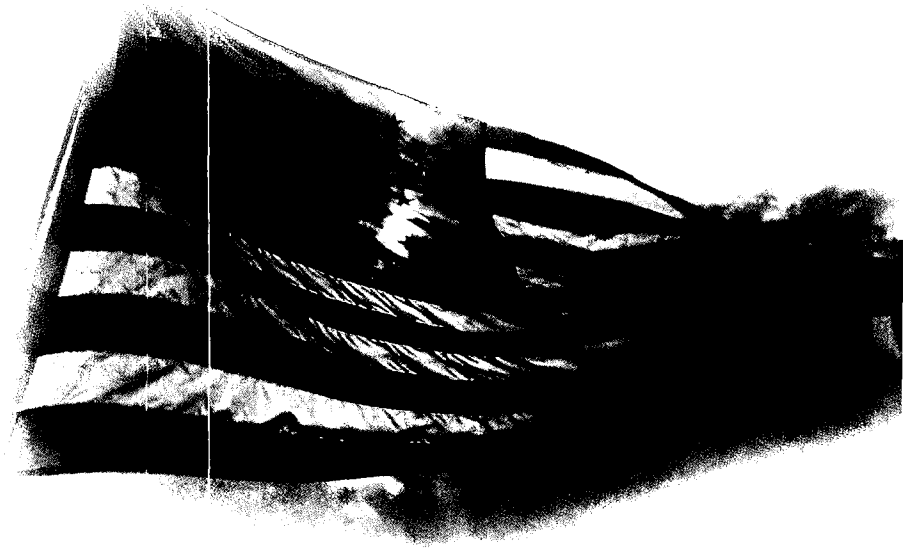

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